

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 117TH NATIONAL CON-
VENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, THE VETERANS
OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF
THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HELD IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, JULY 24-27, 2016, PUR-
SUANT TO 44 U.S.C. 1332; (PUBLIC LAW 90-620 (AS AMENDED
BY PUBLIC LAW 105-225, SEC. 3); (112 STAT. 1498)



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NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS;
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The proceedings of the national encampments of the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Veterans of World War I of the United States, Incorporated, the Disabled American Veterans, and the AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II), respectively, shall be printed annually, with accompanying illustrations, as separate House documents of the session of the Congress to which they may be submitted.

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
May, 2017

Honorable Paul Ryan
The Speaker U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, July 24-27, 2016, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Wallace", written in a cursive style.

Robert E. Wallace
Adjutant General

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Including societies that amalgamated to form Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The Veterans of Foreign Service and the Army of the Philippines amalgamated at Denver, CO, August 1913, forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars as it is today. However, the birth of the order dates from September 29, 1899, when the first national officers were elected and the eligibility clause adopted. The original chapter was granted October 11, 1899.

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

1899-1900	James C. Putnam* Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1900-1901	Maj. Will S. White* Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1901-1902	Maj. Will S. White* Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1902-1903	James Romanis* Elected at Washington Courthouse, Ohio.
1903-1904	James Romanis* Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1904-1905	James Romanis* Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1905-1906	George Metzger* Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1906-1907	Charles H. Devereaux* Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1907-1908	David T. Nevin* ... Elected at James Exposition Grounds, Virginia.
1908-1909	J. Alfred Judge* Elected at Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
1909-1910	J. Alfred Judge* Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	Robert J. Woodside* Elected at Jersey City, New Jersey.
1911-1912	Robert J. Woodside* Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1912-1913	Robert J. Woodside* Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Veterans of Foreign Service
(Eastern Branch)

1903-1904	Capt. Robert S. Hansburg * Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1904-1905	H.O. Kelly * Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

(The above two organizations amalgamated September 1905, at Altoona,
Pennsylvania.)

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene * Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale * Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.

1902-1903	Gen. Irvin Hale *	.....Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King *	..... Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *	..... Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *	.....Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow *	.....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *	..... Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett *	..... Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A. H. Anderson *	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *	..... Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	Warner Karling *	..... Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

1913-1914	Rice W. Means*	..... Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago *	..... Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*	..... Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston*	.....Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling*	..... Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling*	.....Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside*	.....Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*	..... Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston*	..... Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett*	..... Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn*	..... Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*	.....Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt*	..... Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer*	.....Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver*	..... Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff*	..... Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman *	..... Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe*	.....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*	..... Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*	..... Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt*	..... Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt*	.....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny*	..... Elected at Denver, Colorado.

1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres* .....Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp* .....Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer* .....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill* .....Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger* .....Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman* Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs * Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis* Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton* .....Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards* Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice* .....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy* Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt* .....Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan* .....Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell* Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1962-1963	Byron B. Gentry* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1963-1964	Joseph J. Lombardo* Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1964-1965	John A. Jenkins* Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1965-1966	Andy Borg* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1966-1967	Leslie M. Fry* .....Elected at New York, New York.
1967-1968	Joseph A. Scerra* .....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan* Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1969-1970	Raymond A. Gallagher* ....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1970-1971	Herbert R. Rainwater* Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1971-1972	Joseph L. Vicites* .....Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1972-1973	Patrick E. Carr* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1973-1974	Ray R. Soden* .....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.

1974-1975	John J. Stang* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker* Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R. D. Smith Jr. ....Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasyluk* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom* Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.* ..Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T. C. Selman* .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock* .....Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock* .....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James R. Currieo Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford G. Olson Jr .....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum.....Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab* Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1987-1988	Earl L. Stock* .....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1988-1989	Larry W. Rivers .....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1989-1990	Walter G. Hogan Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery* Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace.....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer..... Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. "Gunner" Kent.....Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
1996-1997	James E. Nier .....Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1997-1998	John E. Moon Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1998-1999	Thomas A. Pouliot Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
1999-2000	John W. Smart .....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2000-2001	John F. Gwizdak Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2001-2002	James N. Goldsmith* Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
2002-2003	Raymond C. Sisk* .....Elected at Nashville, Tennessee.
2003-2004	Edward S. Banas, Sr. ....Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
2004-2005	John Furgess.....Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
2005-2006	James R. Mueller..... Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
2006-2007	Gary L. Kurpius Elected at Reno, Nevada.
2007-2008	George J. Lisicki .....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
2008-2009	Glen M. Gardner, Jr. Elected at Orlando, Florida.
2009-2010	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr. Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.

2010-2011	Richard L. Eubank.....	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
2011-2012	Richard L. DeNoyer	Elected at San Antonio, Texas.
2012-2013	John E. Hamilton	Elected at Reno, Nevada.
2013-2014	William A. Thien	Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
2014-2015	John W. Stroud.....	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
2015-2016	John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
2016-2017	Bernard J. Duffy	Elected at Charlotte, North Carolina.

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2015-2016

Commander-in-Chief.....	John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Bernard J. “Brian” Duffy
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	Keith E. Harman
Adjutant General.....	John E. Hamilton
Quartermaster General.....	Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General	Matthew M. “Fritz” Mihelcic
Surgeon General	Curtis O. “Doc” Bohlman
National Chaplain.....	Joseph N. “Nick” Guest
National Chief of Staff.....	Allen Q. Jones
Inspector General	William J. “Doc” Schmitz
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Assistant Adjutant General, Administration & Programs	Kevin C. Jones
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Associate Director, Administrative Operations	Zach Schwenk
Associate Director, Administrative Operations	Johnathan Duncan
Director, Communications & Public Affairs, Washington	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources	vacant
Director, Membership.....	Robert A. Crider
Deputy Director, Membership	Rick Butler
Director, National Legislative Service	Raymond C. Kelley
Deputy Director, National Legislative Service.....	Aleks A. Morosky
Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Gerald T. Manar
Director, Operations for the Quartermaster General.....	Patrick J. Botbyl
Director, Programs.....	vacant
Manager, National Veterans & Military Support	Linda L. Ferguson
Associate Director, Programs Student Outreach, Employment & Transition Services	vacant
Director, Properties	Billy R. Weissend

Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine Richard K. Kolb
 Staff CounselJohn R. Muckelbauer

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS, 2015-2016

Department of Alabama	George Jones
Department of Alaska	Robert Myles
Department of Arizona	Timothy Borland
Department of Arkansas	Terry Callahan
Department of California	Denis Wells
Department of Colorado	Ronald Lattin
Department of Connecticut	Richard DiFederico
Department of Delaware	John Morrow
Department of District of Columbia	Herman Salley
Department of Europe	Peter Mascetti
Department of Florida	Daniel Duffy
Department of Georgia	Pledge Cannon
Department of Hawaii	Norbert Enos
Department of Idaho	John Crotinger
Department of Illinois	John Davin
Department of Indiana	Gregory Baker
Department of Iowa	Darrell Blasberg
Department of Kansas	James J. T. Plummer
Department of Kentucky	Claud Wyatt
Department of Louisiana	Fred Wesley
Department of Maine	Raymond Lupo
Department of Maryland	Eugene Stewart
Department of Massachusetts	George Murray
Department of Michigan	Harry Croyle
Department of Minnesota	Gary Anderson
Department of Mississippi	Johnnie Richard
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Department of New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky
Department of New York	James McNally
Department of North Carolina	Jason Schoolcraft
Department of North Dakota	Dale Ronning
Department of Ohio	Chuck Keller
Department of Oklahoma	Michael Devenitch

Department of Oregon	Bert Key
Department of Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus
Department of Pennsylvania	Robert Eiler
Department of Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott, Jr.
Department of South Carolina	Melvin Gunter, Jr.
Department of South Dakota	Darold Couch
Department of Tennessee	Darryl McPheron
Department of Texas	Lazaro Velasquez
Department of Utah	Brent Neilsen
Department of Vermont	Ronald Tallman
Department of Virginia	Kim DeShano
Department of Washington	Jerry Herker
Department of West Virginia	Robert Caruthers
Department of Wisconsin	John Giese
Department of Wyoming	James Pedersen
Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief	John W. Stroud

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

July 18- 22, 2015, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Convention Committee Chairman	Robert Eiler
Medical - Health Fair Chairman	Ruth Fairchild
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Larry Wade
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration Operations	Jerry Newberry
Manager, Meetings & Events	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	Peter Hook
Patriotic Rally Chairman	Larry Bresselsmith
Registration Chairman	Harry Mannela
Transportation Chairman	Howard Strain

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

	POST
Ronald Servary, Captain	521 MD
Albert Brown	3792 DE
Jay Cabacar	5471 DC
Kathleen Carlson	160 MD
Marco De La Rosa	7356 MO
Johnathan Duncan	852 KS
Mark Herron	5789 MO

Alfred Simmons	8509 MD
Clinton Slack	475 DE
Edward Smith	2863 DE

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

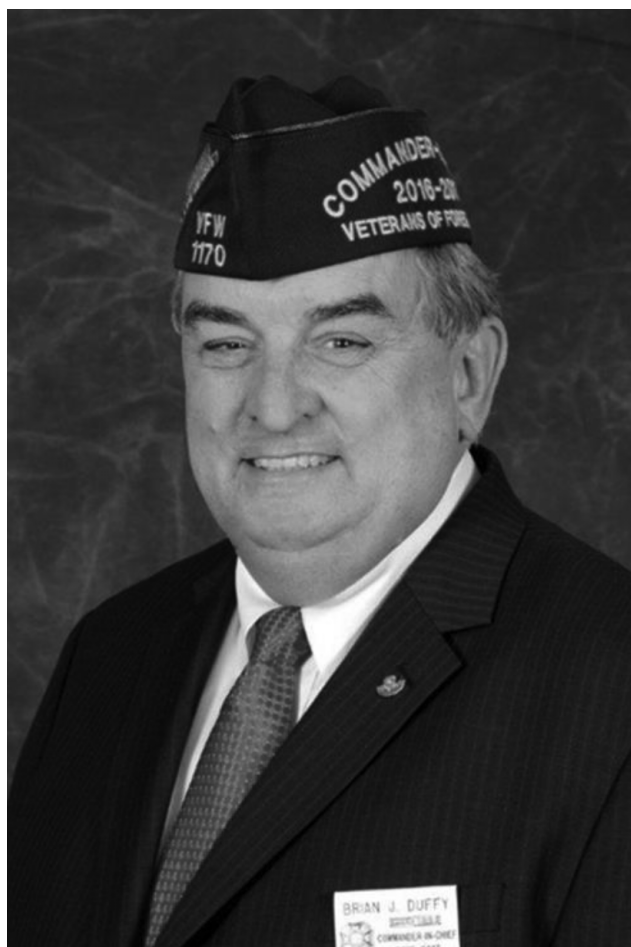
	POST
Bryan P. O’Brien	2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Joy Ausman	10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer	9134 NC
James Galen	6802 TX
Garold Gamble	345 MI
George Lott	10152 NJ
Keith Mac Donald	2275 CA
Joseph Schirmers	4847 MN



John A. Biedrzycki, Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
2015-2016



Bernard J. Duffy
Commander-in-Chief
2016-2017

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2016-2017

Commander-in-Chief.....	Bernard J. "Brian" Duffy
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.....	Keith E. Harman
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	Vincent "B.J." Lawrence
Adjutant General.....	Robert E. Wallace
Quartermaster General.....	Debra L. Anderson
Judge Advocate General	G. Anthony "Tony" Wolusky
Surgeon General	James R. "Doc" Tuorila
National Chaplain.....	Rev. Peter R. Hook
National Chief of Staff.....	Carl J. Kaelin
Inspector General	Harold J. "Hal" Roesch, II
Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General	Kevin C. Jones
Director, Administration & Operations, Washington Office	Robert H. Jackson
Director, Administrative Operations.....	David E. Prohaska
Associate Director, Administrative Operations	Zach Schwenk
Associate Director, Administrative Operations	Johnathan Duncan
Director, Communications, Public Affairs & Publication, Washington Office	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Human Resources	Steven A. Chambers
Director, Membership.....	Robert A. Crider
Deputy Director, Membership-Marketing.....	Rick Butler
Director, National Legislative Service	Raymond C. Kelley
Deputy Director, National Legislative Service.....	Carlos U. Fuentes
Director, National Veterans Service.....	Gerald T. Manar
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Ryan M. Gallucci
Deputy Director, National Veterans Service	Dawn M. Jirak
Director, Operations for the Quartermaster General.....	vacant
Director, Programs.....	Lynn W. Rolf, III
Manager, National Veterans & Military Support	Linda L. Ferguson
Associate Director, Programs Student Outreach, Employment & Transition Services	Brooklynne M. Mosley
Director, Properties	Billy R. Weissend
Director, Publications and Editor-in-Chief, VFW magazine	Richard K. Kolb
General Counsel.....	John R. Muckelbauer

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS, 2016-2017

Department of Alabama	George Jones
Department of Alaska	Walter Watts, Jr.
Department of Arizona	Michael Ferguson
Department of Arkansas	Terry Callahan
Department of California	Earl Fulk

Department of Colorado
Department of Connecticut
Department of Delaware
Department of District of Columbia
Department of Europe
Department of Florida
Department of Georgia
Department of Hawaii
Department of Idaho
Department of Illinois
Department of Indiana
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Department of Kansas
Department of Kentucky
Department of Louisiana
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Department of Missouri
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Department of Nevada
Department of New Hampshire
Department of New Jersey
Department of New Mexico
Department of New York
Department of North Carolina
Department of North Dakota
Department of Ohio
Department of Oklahoma
Department of Oregon
Department of Pacific Areas
Department of Pennsylvania
Department of Rhode Island
Department of South Carolina
Department of South Dakota
Department of Tennessee
Department of Texas
Department of Utah
Department of Vermont
Department of Virginia

Bruce Dolan
Richard DiFederico, Jr.
John Morrow
Herman Salley
Peter Mascetti
Daniel Duffy
Pledge Cannon, Sr.
Stanley Fernandez
Rick Johnson
John Davin
Gregory Baker
Darrell Blasberg
Bobby Cox
Claud Wyatt
Fred Wesley
Raymond Lupo
Eugene Stewart
George Murray
Harry Croyle
Gary Anderson
Johnnie Richard
Phillip Pippins
Arthur Widhalm
John Iossi
Gilbert Hernandez
Paul Lloyd
Manuel Almeida
Kathie Schiebel
James McNally
Jason Schoolcraft
James Hapala
Chuck Keller
Michael Devenitch
Bert Key
Shawn Watson
Robert Eiler
Allen Wagonblott, Jr.
Melvin Gunter, Jr.
Darold Couch
Darryl McPheron
Lazaro Velasquez
Dennis Parizek
Ronald Tallman
Kim DeShano

Department of Washington
Department of West Virginia
Department of Wisconsin
Department of Wyoming
Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief

Frederick Green
Robert Caruthers
John Giese
Rodney Birkle
John Biedrzycki, Jr.

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE
July 23-27, 2016, Charlotte, North Carolina

Convention Committee Chairman	Billy Ray Cameron
Convention Committee Co-Chairman	John Goin
Medical - Health Fair Chairman	Chris Sikes
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	Lewie Cooper
Meeting Halls, Signs & Flags Co-Chairman	William (Bill) Hertline
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Manager, Meetings & Events	Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM
Memorial Service Chairman	Jim Dyer
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NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

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Albert Brown	3792 DE
Jay Cabacar	5471 DC
Kathleen Carlson	160 MD
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Johnathan Duncan	852 KS
Mark Herron	5789 MO
Alfred Simmons	8509 MD
Clinton Slack	475 DE
Edward Smith	2863 DE

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

	POST
Bryan P. O'Brien	2394 MA

NATIONAL ASSISTANT SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

Joy Ausman	10043 ID
Gary W. Barringer	9134 NC
James Galen	6802 TX
Garold Gamble	345 MI
George Lott	10152 NJ
Keith Mac Donald.....	2275 CA
Joseph Schirmers	4847 MN

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 117th NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA, JULY 24-27, 2016

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY JULY 24, 2016

(The Memorial Service of the 117th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, was called to order at 8:30 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to their reserved seating.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise as we bring in the Gold Star Parents, the Past National Chaplains, and the families of our deceased Past Commander-in-Chiefs. Please, no applause.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement and presentation of Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard Advanced, Posted, and Saluted the Flag of the United States of America.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, followed by the National Anthem, and then the posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the National Anthem sung by Carolyn Grusse, National Soloist, VFW Auxiliary, and the Posting of the Colors.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Please remain standing for the Invocation by National Chaplain Joseph Nick Guest.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Let us pray. O Lord, God, ruler of Heaven and Earth, we ask Your divine guidance, for You alone are the giver of love and mercy. And it is only through You that we find truth and justice.

We thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon our beloved country and made it a beacon of light that radiates hope and promise to the oppressed peoples of the world that look upon it as truly being the Shining City on a Hill. You have blessed all of us, in that we can and have succeeded in times of war and peace.

We ask for Your continued guidance that we may fulfill our duties to You, our country, our families, and to each other. For even though we have taken off our uniforms of the individually chosen service, we have a sacred obligation to continue to watch over and care for each other as we did in the crucible of combat.

As we are gathered here today to pay homage to our honored dead, we can feel Your presence with us. We ask that You continue to be with us during this Memorial Service and into the week beyond.

We know that You have taken the spirit of our beloved comrades to Your bosom and eased all of their suffering and pain. We ask that You watch over our prisoners of war and those missing in action; that You give them strength of body and soul so that they know that You are with them always. We ask that You comfort their families, and we pray that they return safely to their loved ones.

Lord, we seek Your blessings on us as we go through the ensuing week so that we may strive to always do what is right and just for we know that without You, we can accomplish nothing.

All of this we ask in Your great and holy name.

Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the opening of this memorial service has been completed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Sergeant.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Please be seated. The Charlotte Chorale will now perform "Song for the Unsung Hero."

(Whereupon, the Charlotte Chorale sang "Song for the Unsung Hero.")

IN MEMORIAM OF ROBERT E. HANSEN,
DR. JOHN WASYLIK, AND JOHN J. STANG

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Sadly, three of the great VFW Commanders-in-Chief passed away this year: Robert E. Hansen on July

25th,2015; Dr. John Wasylik on September the 2nd, 2015;and John J. Stang on March the 14th, 2016.

As indicated in the program, Robert Hansen was Commander-in-Chief from 1961 and '62.

Dr. John Wasylik was Commander-in-Chief from 1977 and '78.

And John Stang was Commander-in-Chief from 1974 and '75.

The family of Chief Hansen is represented by his wife, Susan; and her son, Paul; and daughter, Susan -- I'm sorry, Susan Hansen and her son Paul.

The family of Chief Stang is represented by his wife, Mary, Mary Lou Stang, and daughters Debra Stang, Sharon Cross, and Karen Hanley.

The family of Chief Wasylik was unable to attend. Therefore, he is being represented by Ronnie W. Davis, Commander, Department of Ohio, and Diane Moore Morris, President, VFW Auxiliary, Department of Ohio.

Please remember them in your prayers.

Comrades, Auxiliary members, and friends, we meet at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The VFW ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding.

The Chief of Staff will see that there is no disturbances during the ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF ALLEN JONES: Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform this solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope, and charity.

We will now have the lighting of the POW-MIA candle and the Armed Forces vigil candle by the Commander-in-Chief and the National President of the VFW Auxiliary.

*(Whereupon, the POW-MIA candle and the
Armed Forces Vigil candle were lit.)*

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Let us pray. O God Almighty, creator and ruler of the universe, some of our comrades and companions are prisoners of war and missing in action. Comfort them.

We pray in their isolation from their homes and loved ones. Supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation. Strengthen and sustain them, that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution.

Grant that they may find patience to endure, and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.

O God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. In the day of battle may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious.

In the time of peace, may they serve with dignity and honor as effective emissaries of goodwill for this nation. May their devotion and loyalty to You and to their homeland inspire them in moments of challenge, and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.

And, finally, we ask that You may – that they may return safely to You and our country in the days and years to come. Amen.

MEMORIAL RITUAL

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to whom should the true soldier look for help in the battles of life?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made Heaven and Earth."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what assurance have we of a prolonged stay among the scenes and activities of Earth?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were our fathers; our days on Earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, have you a message of condolence for those bereaved?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HARMAN: I have. The Book of Life tells us that "Like a" -- "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our fame" -- "our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: What message has the Chaplain of the VFW Auxiliary?

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HAAKE: I have a message of hope that should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the captain of our salvation. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrades, we are thankful for these inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that we too are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage, and sooner or later, these services may be held in our memory.

Let us so live that when our summons comes, we may depart with good conscience, in the comfort of a sincere religion, belief in God, and a perfect charity toward all mankind.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we ask Thy blessing upon us as we grieve our departed comrades. We ask that You reach down and touch the hearts of the loved ones left behind and lift their spirits that they may find comfort and strength in your love. Help us, O Lord, to have strength to accept Thy will and to carry on, though it may be hard for us to understand.

We ask that You look after the souls of our departed comrades for they have done what was asked of them while here on Earth, and lived life knowing that You were always beside them in their endeavors. We ask that You take them into Your arms and care for them until they are once again united with their loved ones in Your house.

Although it is hard for those left behind to understand Your plan, we know that You have a grand plan for all of us, and some day we will stand before You as our departed comrades are now.

Give us the strength and the will to live such lives of devotion to You, our country, and our family; that when our time comes, we can stand proudly before You knowing we have done our best, as our departed comrades before us have. In Your blessed name we pray. Amen.

Carolyn Grusse, the National Soloist for the VFW Auxiliary, will now perform "Sleep Soldier Boy."

(Whereupon, VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Carolyn Grusse sang
"Sleep Soldier Boy.")

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes, who served their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth, and justice.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to offer upon this sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The blue of our national standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Madam President and members of the VFW Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: I have placed upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of our eternity. Its colors bespeak the life of everlasting. Trust do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines on land, on sea, in the air are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: The Charlotte Chorale will now perform "Mansions of the Lord."

(Whereupon, the Charlotte Chorale sang "Mansions of the Lord.")

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: The Commander-in-Chief will now introduce our guest speaker.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It is my distinct pleasure to introduce our speaker, Clebe McClary. Patrick Cleburne "Clebe" McClary was raised on a 10,000-acre plantation in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

Young Clebe grew up hunting, fishing, and excelling at sports. And after fulfilling his dream of becoming a college coach, Clebe had planned to marry a beautiful Southern belle. Life was very good.

But only weeks before the wedding, he witnessed a startling event on a college campus that changed the course of his life forever: The burning of an American flag by students protesting the Vietnam conflict.

Dismayed by the lack of support for the country he loved, Clebe resigned from his coaching position and volunteered for duty in the Marine Corps.

Completing officer's training school in Quantico, Virginia, First Lieutenant McClary said goodbye to his bride and became platoon leader for the First Recon Battalion in Vietnam.

On the 19th Recon Patrol, deep in hostile territory, Clebe and his unit engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Suffering devastating injuries, which included the loss of his left arm and left eye, he continued to lead his men.

Clebe's valiant battle with the pain and the disabilities that followed is nothing short of amazing. He spent over two years in military hospitals undergoing over 30 major surgeries and countless hours of physical therapy.

Since then, Clebe has used his powerful story of courage, determination, and strength to motivate audiences the world over.

I now present to you our Memorial speaker, Clebe McClary.

(Applause)

COMRADE CLEBE McCLARY: Thank you very much. It's an honor to be here today. Jim Dyer invited me as North Carolina Chaplain. I've been a lifetime member since I was released from the hospital of VFW.

Jim could have had tens of thousands of speakers from the Carolinas a lot better than I. But believe me, folks, nobody owes you any more than I do. I owe you my life. Had it not been for the young men on a hill in Vietnam, many that gave their lives, I'd be dead today.

If it hadn't been for an 18-year-old wife that loved me, cared for me, gave me a reason and a will to live, I'd be dead right now. I'm here to say thank you, and I'm truly honored to be with you.

My wife ties my ties, buttons my shirt, does everything just about for me. Come Easter Sunday, it'll be 50 years. She gave me a want to and a will to live.

That last patrol, I had a recon team. We were going in an area that very few men had been. Instead of going with a six-man team, we went in with 13. Landed on a small tea plantation in the middle of a large valley.

As we landed, we found punji pits, booby traps, mines. But we were very fortunate, nobody was killed sitting there on the hill. I cleared a punji pit, got in the bottom of that. Had my Radioman MacCormin dig a foxhole to my left, three men in a foxhole to my right.

About 50 yards behind me, a bomb had exploded. It left a big crater in the ground, and I put eight men around the edges of that crater thinking they'd have good bit of protection.

About 12:00 o'clock that night, I thought I heard some enemy movement at the bottom of the hill. I grabbed my shotgun, a Winchester Model 12 pump, crawled out of the punji pit and started making my way to the right to see if these men had heard anything.

Before I got to them, a grenade came in. It exploded, hit me here in the neck and in the shoulder. And like any other brave lieutenant, I jumped back in the hole I'd crawled out of and started calling for artillery and air support to our position.

While I was on the radio, about 10 or 12 enemy, what we call a sapper unit in 'Nam, better known to you probably as a suicide squad. Sort of like these terrorists they've got today.

These men had grenades tied around their waists, had grenades in each hand and the pins pulled, just run up the hill exploding, killing themselves, trying to kill us.

As you can imagine, we was shooting as fast as we could. One got right in front of me, I shot him. There was one man above the hole with me. As he fell in, he had something in his hands about the size of one of you lady's pocketbooks. It was a satchel charge. It was full of explosion.

He fell in with this. It exploded, blew the two of us out of the punji pit. I'm going through the air, I reached back for my shotgun. I realize the blast had blown my left arm off just above my elbow.

I looked to my left. My Radioman MacCormin was dead or unconscious. At the time I wasn't sure which.

Heard my three men on the right cry out. What had happened, a grenade come in their foxhole.

A young Marine, PFC Ralph Johnson, Burke High School Charleston, South Carolina, Ralph jumped on a grenade, smothered it with his stomach, blew himself in half. Saved my life, the life of two Marines with him.

His family later received the nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. 38 years ago we named a VA Hospital -- it used to be the Charleston VA, now it's Ralph H. Johnson in honor of Ralph.

Eight years ago, we named a street in Charleston after him.

In April, the Navy's building a ship, and that destroyer was christened Ralph H. Johnson, in honor of Ralph. And I appreciate that.

Then I tried to get over to them. As I crawled away, another grenade came in. As it did, I threw my hands up. This arm was off -- right hand covering my right eye. Grenade exploded, blew my left eye off, nose off, teeth on the left side out, both eardrums out. Lost most of the use of my right hand.

Things were looking pretty tough, and I think my only chance was getting in crater behind me where they'd been fighting. I tried running to the bomb crater. Before I got there, a grenade hit me in the legs.

I lay there it seemed like hours. I don't know how long had passed, but believe me, you-all, I never wanted to live so bad in all my life. If I could just see my men get off that hill alive. If I could see my bride one more time.

Heard some movement behind me. I said, It's over now. As they got close, I heard something go, "Lieutenant, Lieutenant." Recognized the voice, an 18-year-old Marine I had from Alaska. He's Indian. Rod Hunter.

Rod got me on my feet. We'd just pick an enemy off, skim up a hill. Bob Lucas won a Navy cross the earlier battle with me, from Fort Worth, Texas. Bob came over, got a radio called for choppers.

The pilot said he couldn't get in there till daylight. Bob said, "Tell them to forget it. We've been throwing rocks at the side of the hill. Out of grenades. Won't anybody be here at daylight."

The pilots reconsidered. 3:00 a.m. the first bird landed. Put my two dead, five wounded on that chopper. As it lifted, the next one landed. The rest of my men grabbed ahold.

As that bird lifted, about 150 enemy just covered the hill. Five more minutes, nobody gotten out of there alive. Flew us to Marble Mountain. Had surgery there. From there to Japan. From there to Bethesda, Maryland.

I started walking a little bit. They said, "Your best bet's to go home on leave."

Came to my wife's hometown, Florence, South Carolina, and I started to go have a rally with Bobby Richardson, Miss America. And the speaker was Chap- -- personal Chaplain for Gerald Ford, Billy Zeoli.

And Billy brought a message that night that God used to change our lives.

You may think that my men suffered that night on that hill, that I suffered, that my wonderful wife has suffered. 41 operations now and 2 1/2 years in the hospital, you suffer. Death in the family, broken home, maybe a financial problem.

But then I found that our Bible has become our most prized possession. Roman's Chapter 5, Verses 3 through 5, says we rejoice in our suffering. Because suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character. Character produces hope. Hope doesn't disappoint us. Because God's love was put into our hearts as a free gift from the Holy Spirit.

I had two dead and eight wounded on that hill that night. Two others have killed themselves since we've been home. But my men that could walk in that MASH unit came by one at a time just to get a last look at me, just to tell me bye.

I started to say they were crying. But you know Marines, we think we're tough; we don't cry, but the eyeballs were sweating pretty good. And they lay a plaque down by me and on that plaque it said, "In this world of give and take, there are not enough people willing to give what it takes."

What an honor to be with folks like you, preparing yourself mentally, physically, spiritually. Willing to give what it takes for our faith; for our flag; for our families; you veterans, our freedom; you young people, our future; the way of life we know and enjoy so well because of great folks like you, the price you paid. God bless you.

(Applause)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: At this time in memory of Past Commanders-in-Chief Robert E. Hansen, Dr. John Wasyluk, and John J. Stang, red roses will be presented to their families and representatives. Our sincere sympathy is extended to the family and friends.

The Charlotte Chorale will now perform "Ashokan Farewell."

(Whereupon, the Charlotte Chorale sang "Ashokan Farewell.")

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Please stand for the Benediction by Chaplain Peter R. Hook.

BENEDICTION

CHAPLAIN HOOK: Almighty God, as we conclude our annual Memorial Service, we are reminded that you, O Lord, are God, creator and the giver of life. You have blessed all present here today with life, and we are grateful for each day that we have been given.

As we have remembered and honored those who once sat with us, we give thanks for the time we had with them and for their commitment and service to preserve liberty and freedom in our own land and in the world.

The fallen, whether in the air, on the land, or on the sea have provided for all that which we appreciate today.

Continue to give daily strength and grace to the Gold Star Families. May we remember and continue to remember our Comrades's loved ones. May we remember with grateful hearts full of thanksgiving to You for Your grace and mercy to them.

And now, Lord, be gracious and merciful to us. Let Your light shine upon us for You are our God and You are our Savior. In the scriptures, You are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And unto You we ascribe glory now and forevermore. Amen.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: We will now have playing of "Taps" by Staff Sergeant Michael Bolten.

(Whereupon, Staff Sergeant Michael Bolten played Taps.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the hall for the retiring of the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir.

Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, advance and retire the Flag of the United States of America.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We would like to acknowledge and thank all of the participants who contributed to making this program such a success.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains from the room.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains are escorted from the hall.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: This concludes our Memorial Service. Thank you all for your attendance.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 9:30 a.m.)

*JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, JULY 25, 2016*

(The Joint Opening Session of the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 103rd National Convention of the VFW Auxiliary, held in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, was called to order on Monday, July 25, 2016, at 8:00 a.m., by Adjutant General John Hamilton.)

CALL TO ORDER

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm John Hamilton, Adjutant General of Veterans of Foreign Wars. I'd like to welcome you to this Joint Opening Session of the 117th National Convention.

I'd like to begin your -- I would like to begin this morning by drawing your attention to the large screens as this year's convention sponsors are displayed. Without their generosity, this convention simply would not have been possible.

Special appreciation goes to our primary supporters: Burger King; D. G. Yuengling & Son, Incorporated; Sport Clips; Twisted X Boots; and USAA.

Representatives from 2015-2016 Outstanding Community Service Booths are with us this morning. Please stand and be recognized.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I am pleased to say this year 365 commanders have earned the title of All-American: 22 Department commanders, 71 District commanders, and 272 Post commanders have received this honor. And those in attendance will receive their awards this morning.

In the meantime, Commanders, please stand so we can thank you for your excellent work over the past year.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I have just a few brief announcements before we proceed this morning. We've planned another exciting Patriotic Celebration to take part tomorrow evening. The Oak Ridge Boys will put on a special private concert at the BB&T Ballpark.

Before the concert gets underway, we will have a patriotic march of Departments. All 53, by the way, are participating. So if your Department is there, please show support for them and march with your Colors.

We have storage space available afterwards after the march. Please line up to catch a bus into BB&T Ballpark tomorrow no later than 5:00 p.m. out side of your hotel. I'm sure everyone has the information on this already. We expect a huge crowd so we want to try to get you over there early.

We'll mast the Colors. Then we'll have a swearing in of, I think, 20 people to join the Army there tomorrow. The Chief and the President will take

the review. We'll have his comments. Then we'll have a 90-minute concert by the Oak Ridge Boys, and followed by an impressive fireworks display. So you certainly don't want to miss that.

And they'll run back from the ballpark to your hotel until 10:30 p.m. and if you're concerned, there will be concessions available at the ballpark. You might want a Coke or a ginger ale or a Sprite, or something.

Tomorrow's evening event is a private event. So please be sure you have your registration badge as a VFW Auxiliary membership card to enter. If you forget your badge and you don't have your membership card, you will not get in, and I can't run around and vouch for everybody. So don't be looking for me. I'll be having a Coke.

Now, if you have a guest, you're more than welcome to bring that guest with you. Okay? But you must have that in your possession.

Also, I want to remind you that if you plan to attend the Commander-in-Chief and the National President Reception on Wednesday, you must attend the installation and have a ticket. Once again, don't be looking for me, I'll be having a Coke.

You have to come to the thing on Wednesday, get your ticket as you exit. That will get you in the Commander-in-Chief's Reception. Once the installation concludes, the sergeants, of course, will pass out the tickets. I have covered that.

And, finally, if you haven't done so, please download the VFW Convention app to your smart phone. The ladies have one as well -- excuse me, the Auxiliary has one as well. 43 years is hard to break. And no one fought any harder for that deal than me, believe me.

The app will provide you with immediate access to all pertinent convention information. It will also allow you to receive updates as schedules and rooms could change. The app is available at both the iTunes App Store and the Google Play Store. Just search for VFW Convention.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLY RAY CAMERON AND JOHN GOIN, CO-CHAIRMEN VFW 117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Now, please join me and welcome this year's convention chairman, a long-time friend of mine and a new friend of mine, but that first Vietnam veteran, great friend, United States Marine, Billy Ray Cameron and John Goin.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMRADE JOHN GOIN, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE VFW 117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMRADE GOIN: Good morning, Comrades and Auxiliary members. As this year's convention co-chairmen, we are pleased to welcome you-all to our home state, home of the first airplane flight, the great state of North Carolina.

North Carolina is home to over 775,000 veterans, and we are home to seven military installations, employ hundreds of thousands of active-duty military members. These members alone make for an impressive and fitting reason to have our National Convention here.

We sincerely hope that the time you spend with us this week is enjoyable and that you leave here with a great sense of pride and belonging to our wonderful organization.

Our conventions serve to reinforce our commitment to America, to veterans and military, and bring new excitement to our work as members of the VFW and the Auxiliary.

I ask you now to please rise as we officially open the convention with the advancing of the Colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to advance the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the Colors were advanced at this time by the
National Honor Guard.)

INVOCATION

COMRADE GOIN: For this morning's invocation, we will have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Nick Guest.

Please then remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Sergeants-at-Arms; the National Anthem sung by Carolyn Grusse, the Auxiliary National Soloist; and the posting of the Colors.

INVOCATION BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to do the business of our great organization and to strengthen old friendships and make new friendships.

We thank You for our safe arrival, and ask that You continue to watch over those that are still en route.

As we go about our business, we ask that You watch over us and guide us as we deliberate, always reminding us that we are here to do what is best -- what is in the best interest of our organization.

We are so very grateful for all of the blessings that You have bestowed upon us. We are especially thankful for our good health that has enabled us to be here with our fellow comrades, brothers, sisters, and friends.

We are thankful that You have watched over our officers as they have traveled the world doing the work of their order, granting them safe travels and brought them home safely, that they may be with us during this convention.

We ask that You watch over our country's leaders and keep them safe.

We ask that You guide them as they make the hard decisions that affect our country.

We ask that You watch over the ones who want to be the next leaders of our country and grant them safe travels as they campaign from state to state.

Lord, please look over the brave men and women of our country's military so they may safely return to their families.

We ask that You may continue to bless our country, which You have already so richly blessed.

All of this, we ask in Your holy name.

Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, followed by the National Anthem, and then the posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given, followed by the singing of the National Anthem by VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Carolyn Grusse, and then the posting of the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Chairman, the opening for the 117th National Convention has been completed.

COMRADE GOIN: Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: You're welcome.

COMRADE GOIN: It's not in my script, but let's give a round of applause to our Honor Guard and our Sergeant-at-Arms, please.

(Applause)

COMRADE GOIN: Now, please dim the lights for a special presentation.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video was shown at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMRADE GOIN: It brings me great pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served his country and the VFW for a combined 49 years. He's a US Army veteran and has worked to serve his fellow veterans in a multitude of responsibilities with the VFW, most recently as Commander-in-Chief.

John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on July 22nd, 2015, at the VFW's 116th National Convention held in his home state of Pennsylvania.

Comrade Biedrzycki served in the US Army 1967 to 1970. He served in Korea as a pay distribution specialist with the 7th Infantry Division. His decorations include the National Defense Service Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and the Korean Defense Medal.

He joined the VFW in 1967 at Post 418 in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, where he maintains his Legacy Life Membership.

Comrade Biedrzycki has served the VFW in many leadership positions, including post, county, district, and department levels. He was Pennsylvania's Department Commander from 2002 to 2003, in which he achieved All-American status.

On the national level, he has served on many committees, including Chairman of the National VFW Programs Committee, Chairman of the National Youth Education Community Service Committee, and Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Committee.

Commander Biedrzycki is a retired educator. He received his bachelor's degree, as well as his master's, in education from the University of Pittsburgh. He's a Life Member of the Military Order of the Cooties and a Life Member of the VFW National Home for Children.

Commander Biedrzycki also serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

He and his wife, Betty Jean, make their home in Robeson Township, Pennsylvania.

Please welcome our National Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki.
(Applause)

(Whereupon, Comrade Goin presented Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki with the convention badge, bell, and gavel.)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you so much. Wow. What a great opening convention.

Billy Ray, I love you, brother.

Our first Vietnam-era commander, Billy Ray Cameron.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Wow, I am fighting back some eyeball sweat here, you know. It's so good to see all of you this morning. Good morning everyone.

(Good morning)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: What a great day to begin the 117th VFW National Convention. It's hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since I stood before you and took the oath of office as the National Commander of the greatest veterans organization in the world.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades, Auxiliary members, and guests, what an honor it's been to lead the Veterans of Foreign Wars over the past year. You've truly afforded me a unique opportunity and an extraordinary experience, one I will cherish and I will hold onto for the remainder of my life.

What made this experience so remarkable for me wasn't our legislative victory for veterans, or assisting of countless service members and military families, or the progress that we've made in bettering the Veterans Administration, or our many other positive achievements.

It was seeing your strength, your resolve in doing what was ever needed to be done to ensure service members, veterans, and military families receive the support and respect that they certainly earn and deserve.

Wherever I traveled, I saw you at work. And it moved my heart to know that together we have accomplished so many great things.

I couldn't be proud of -- couldn't be prouder of everything that you have accomplished.

You've put a lot of demanding hours in. You've made sacrifices. You've deprived yourself of sleep. You've weathered storms and overcome difficult challenges, all the while staying focused on the mission at hand.

It seems as -- almost as if you've received training to keep fast to the mission or, too, in the not so distant past.

As highlighted in this video we just watched, last year I stood before the convention floor, and my first question to the -- as National Commander was: If not for the VFW, who?

Who will keep patriotism alive? Who will ensure America's heros' needs are met? And who will ensure Congress hears the collective voice of our nation's veterans?

It's clear you've been giving that some serious consideration, and you've answered the questions. And I can't thank you enough for your commitment to the VFW mission.

You, each of you, have contributed greatly to the VFW's cause. And you are the reason we can proudly proclaim that no one, no one, does more for veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: As I kick off our National Convention today, I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge a few individuals who have provided me the inspiration and, of course, the support that's needed to serve my best as role as National Commander.

First and foremost, the love of my life, Betty Jean, I wouldn't trade our more than 48 years of happy marriage for anything in the world.

Do you like how I used the word "happy"? I am trained.

The unconditional love and support she's given me over these years is more than any man can deserve.

And my son who's here this morning, I couldn't be prouder to call you my son and thank you for what you've taught me, and that all my – and especially my grandchildren who are watching this live at home being streamed, Max and Molly. And they're going to continue my education to teach me in the years to come.

And by the way, happy birthday, Max. He's nine years old just yesterday.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'd like to thank Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman. It's truly been a pleasure and an honor serving with you.

To the officers and delegates of the Eastern States Conference and the Past Chiefs of the Eastern States -- Richard DeNoyer, George Lisicki, Ed Banas, John Smart, Bob Wallace, Cliff Olson, and Paul Spera -- thank you for your guidance and your friendship. You certainly left a legacy and a heritage for me to live up to.

And, of course, I'd like to extend my sincere thanks, of course, to my post. Appreciation to VFW 418 in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania; my District 29; and, of course, the Department of Pennsylvania.

And to a special World War II veteran and my long-time friend, my Chief of Staff, the National Chief of Staff, Allen Q. Jones; and also my National Council member, Bob Eiler, thank you for your wisdom. Thank you for your guidance.

To the Adjutant General, John Hamilton, and the Executive Director, Bob Wallace, thank you and your staffs in Kansas City and in Washington, DC. You work hard every day on behalf of our posts' membership and the entire veterans community. They really are, in my estimation, the unsung hero, answering your needs at every opportunity that they can.

And, finally, to my VFW and Auxiliary members in the posts, the departments, and the districts that I've had the honor of visiting during my years in the chairs, thank you for what you do for this organization; your kindness; your hospitality; and, most importantly, your friendship.

When I took office as VFW National Commander, I knew that I had only three familiar words to guide me in enacting great change for not just our organization but for those who have worn America's uniform. And those words to me: Honor, loyalty, and service.

Loyalty to country. Honor to America's heroes and institutions. And service to our veterans, their families, our communities, and our nation.

Comrades and friends, these are the words by which we served our country and are undoubtedly the words by which we still serve today. We

embraced their true meaning years ago. And whenever we real- -- whether we realize it or not, they've become part of our daily lives and provide the basis for all we do.

Together we have done some amazing things. Let me mention a few. Hosted more than 2 million service members and their family members to VFW-sponsored events, immeasurably boasting them around.

We've awarded more than \$5.6 million in financial assistance to military families in their time of dire need.

We've provided 2.4 million in scholarships to veterans working to obtain a higher education.

We continue to volunteer more than 9 million hours to our communities each year.

And just these past three years, we've helped more than 255,000 veterans recover 4.5 billion in earned VA benefits. What do you think of that?

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: No one does more for veterans. We need to go back and spread the word. We're not a dying organization. We're moving forward to the next century. And we're going to continue to serve, especially with your leadership. Thank you. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I hope you agree with me. There are only a few -- these are just a few examples of making an impact in America and continue to serve. That service that began so many years ago. This convention simply doesn't allow enough time to highlight everything we've accomplished over our storied history.

But know this: We are the reason America will continue to keep its promise to our nation's heroes and those we leave behind. We are the reason patriotism remains alive and well in communities across America. And we are the reason the service and sacrifice of America's veterans will never be forgotten or brushed aside.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: While we take great pride in what we've done for America's veterans, we must understand that our work is far from over. Though we can predict the future sometimes, most of the time it's not predictable. And we can make an educated assumption that America's veterans, service members, and military families will need us more in the future.

Now more than ever, as new wars are waged, our freedom again threatened, as we again call to the front lines in defense of our country and other countries that cannot defend themselves, America will create new ways of veterans with unique sets of needs.

And so as we conduct this convention over the coming days, and I'll soon pass the mantle of leadership over to our esteemed comrade, Senior Vice Commander Brian Duffy, I ask that each of you, each of you must rededicate

ourselves to the VFW mission with the same sense of resolve with which we've served over the past year.

I remain steadfast in our efforts – and you must so too -- to care for our veterans who have borne the brunt of battle so that we may live in peace and exercise our daily freedoms.

I ask that you continue to support for our nation's youth, our communities. And when bureaucracy or budgetary cuts stand to threaten the programs and benefit of American's finest, we stand stronger than ever. And together those benefits, those gains will not be lost on our watch.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Again, it's been an absolute pleasure to serve you, alongside every one of you, in this past year. I couldn't be prouder of our progress and have asked for a better group of patriots to lead.

And as my tenure comes to an end, I have the utmost confidence in our great organization. And we'll continue to thrive and we'll continue to grow any obstacle that we have in our way.

I'm looking forward to continuing my service with the Veterans of Foreign Wars for many years to come. And will -- again, I thank you for all the memories you've given me as my time as chief. And it's truly been a remarkable honor.

As I conclude my remarks this morning, I want to take a point of personal privilege. Given the recent events of the nation and around the world, I would like to remind all of you that this is our house; this is our convention.

And this week many will come to pay respects to us. They're coming here to see America's true heroes, and that's you. They're coming here to try to convince you that they need our support. And you better believe they do. They need our support.

So I hope that you'll keep that in mind. They're here to pay respects to us. And we, as any good host, should pay respects to them and be cordial --

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: -- and receptive. I realize -- I realize the national political scene has driven things into a frenzy. But who's the steadiest group in our country? Veterans, and that's you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We know what we like. We know what we want. And we know how to be forceful, and we know how to behave in a way that makes us all proud because we've had that training. We've had that experience. And we've had that exposure. So that's just a reminder. And I hope it stays with you the next couple days.

Now, given the recent events around the world -- and there are many who continue to serve and there are many in this room who serve every day. And so I'm going to ask you, as a point of personal privilege, will all police officers, firemen, and emergency medical technicians please stand and be recognized at this time.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I learned a new thing traveling over in the Orient when we were taking pictures. The dignitaries that I met, they would take a normal picture, and then they would ask you to put your finger up, your thumb up, as a sign of goodwill.

And certainly to all of those first responders and police officers in this room, our thumbs up forever. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you for your exemplary service in protecting the well-being of our communities and our nation. God bless you. God bless America. And God bless all of the men and women who serve proudly today and the families who support them.

Now, let's have a great convention. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Give you a chance to air them out a little bit. That was nice.

Thank you for that warm appreciation. I love it. It looks like a convention of old. I've been coming to conventions since the 1970s, and this room is packed and I'm so excited. It should be.

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO FRANCISCA GUILFORD, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE VFW AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's now my distinct pleasure to introduce my esteemed counterpart, the National President of the Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Francisca Guilford is a Life Member of General John Noyes Auxiliary, 9978, in Anchorage, Alaska. She began her journey in the organization in 1989 when she joined on the eligibility of her late husband, who served in the US Army during Vietnam.

Since joining, she has served in a number of capacities for the organization, including terms as Department President, Western States Chairman for Americanism and Buddy Poppy Programs, and four terms as Chief of Staff.

She has served in all types of positions in her department leading up to president, when she was named Runner-up President of the Year.

On the national level, she served as National Americanism Director, Patriotic Instructor, and National District Council Member No. 16.

I'm very proud to have served with her over this past year. It's fair to say that her leadership has certainly led to a banner year for the Auxiliary. Nothing made me prouder than to be the Commander-in-Chief who signed the new charter for the VFW Auxiliary.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I am pleased to present the VFW Gold Member -- Gold Medal of Merit to my wonderful counterpart, a person of great integrity and devotion and to those we serve, National Auxiliary President Francisca Guilford.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: "Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to Francisca Guildford, National President of the Auxiliary Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2015-2016.

"In esteemed recognition and sincere appreciation of her loyal and benevolent concern for veterans as the National President of the Auxiliary to the VFW.

"Her theme, 'Our Veterans Now and Forever,' reflects her outstanding dedication and unique vision and will forever serve as a true and honorable legacy of her presidency.

"Her wealth of experience and long-time commitment to the objectives of the Auxiliary to the VFW have justly earned her the highest level of admiration, respect, and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 25th day of July, 2016," signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, John.

Wow. And here she is. The loveliest Auxiliary member in the room -- after my wife -- our National President, Francisca Guilford.

(Applause)

*REMARKS BY NATIONAL PRESIDENT
FRANCISCA GUILFORD, VFW AUXILIARY*

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, National Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary officers, Past Commander-in-Chiefs, Past National Presidents, Comrades, members, and guests, I am so honored to receive this award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I thank you most sincerely. It is humbling to accept this award, just as it's been humbling to respect.

My presence, Auxiliary members, all yearlong and work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars' counterparts. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary sets high goals this year.

To the Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki and all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars: Job well done.

And to my Auxiliary members: You make me proud.

(Applause)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: My year may be coming to a close. But the work for both of our organization must continue. Now, more than ever, we must support our military and our veterans of the many conflicts of the country has engaged to.

When they come home, the fight is not over. When they open the doors to their homes, the healing is not complete. And when they start living their lives again, we must be there for them.

We must hold our government accountable. We must fight for their rights and their entitlements. We must be the ones to make sure their service is honored. I am not done with this mission. Our organization are needed now and in the future.

This medallion I wear on behalf of all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, their incredible passion and their hard work. Thank you.

To every veteran here today: Thank you. Thank you for answering to the call. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for serving our country. God bless our service members, and God bless America.

(Standing ovation)

*INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE
JENNIFER ROBERTS, MAYOR OF CHARLOTTE*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's my honor and pleasure to introduce our next guest, the mayor of Charlotte. And I'd like to point out to him, as all of you, that this morning the Commander-in-Chief is wearing his racing tie for the checkered flag because it's the end of my year. And it's been matched by the adornment here on the front of the podium and the stage.

So I hope he appreciates that because certainly all of you around the country and in our many posts really enjoy the NASCAR scene.

Jennifer Roberts, born and raised in Charlotte. Mayor Roberts graduated with her bachelor's degree from UNC Chapel Hill.

After moving on to study international affairs and obtain two master's degrees from John Hopkins University and the University of Toronto, she worked in -- as a diplomat for four years with the United States Department of State.

And since moving back to Charlotte, Mayor Roberts served four times on the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners and before being elected as mayor last November.

Like members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Auxiliary, Mayor Roberts is a true community advocate serving on the board and advisory groups throughout the city, and spending many hours each year driving back to her community here and in Charlotte.

Please join me in welcoming Mayor Jennifer Roberts.

(Applause)

*GREETINGS BY THE HONORABLE
MAYOR JENNIFER ROBERTS*

MAYOR ROBERTS: Thank you so much. And on behalf of the City of Charlotte and our 800,000 residents, I am honored to welcome you to the 117th National Convention of the VFW and the 103rd National Convention of the VFW Auxiliary.

And I appreciate so much the Auxiliary. Having grown up in a military family, I know the sacrifices that our families make as well.

In my family, there's a source of great pride that my father and grandfather were Veterans of Foreign Wars.

My grandfather served in both World Wars as a career Army Colonel, and my father served in the Navy in Korea.

And I am still filled with emotion when I think about the men and women in white who came -- the Navy reservists who came to his funeral and folded that flag and played Taps. I thank our reservists as well.

(Applause)

MAYOR ROBERTS: Service to our country and community were central to who my father and grandfather were as people. And I am blessed that they instilled in me the importance of giving back. They passed down to their children the ideal that it is your responsibility and an honor to serve your community and your country.

My grandfather would often tell me that to whom much is given, much is required; that if you are lucky enough to have a roof over your head and a family that loves you, it is your responsibility to give back to the community that has given so much to you.

And I strive to live up to that ideal every day and working to make Charlotte a place where opportunity and success can be achieved by all people. Here in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, we are proud to have over 65,000 veterans.

(Applause)

MAYOR ROBERTS: We are also proud to have just opened a new VA medical facility right here in Charlotte. We are proud to have a local veterans services office. And we are proud to be part of the White House initiative that plans to end homelessness among all veterans. We will achieve that goal by December of this year.

(Applause)

MAYOR ROBERTS: We are so pleased that you have chosen Charlotte for this great event. And I encourage you to enjoy all that our city has to offer while you are here. We are a community of wonderful neighborhoods, parks, museums, restaurants, and sports facilities.

You've already heard about our great NASCAR Hall of Fame and, of course, the NASCAR track to the north of here.

Please be sure to enjoy all of our museums uptown. We have a wonderful Levine Center for the Arts and many other options to mix dining and

entertainment for your stay here, all conveniently located within walking distance of where we are right now.

I have to take a minute of personal privilege. I understand that there is a wonderful delegation here from all of North Carolina. A big shout-out. Will that delegation from North Carolina please stand?

(Applause)

MAYOR ROBERTS: We are so pleased to have the military bases we have here in North Carolina. We are so honored to serve and to be part of the defense and protection of our country.

Thank you all for being here from all over America. We are so grateful for your service.

I am so pleased and honored to have you here in Charlotte. We are honored to be able to share our southern hospitality with you. Please let me know if there is anything the Mayor's Office can do for you while you are here. God bless you all, and God bless America.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Lovely mayor with a storied history of veteranism in her family. And I think that's terrific.

INTRODUCTION OF STUART PARKER, CEO OF USAA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The VFW is fortunate to have a longstanding relationship with a truly outstanding company. The United States Automobile Association, or better known as USAA has been a stalwart supporter of veterans, service members, and their families dating back to its founding in 1922.

Through our alliance with USAA, providing banking, financial advice, and property and casualty insurance to our VFW members, and has supported numerous VFW endeavors over the years.

And I'm proud to welcome our next guest, a man who knows about service and assisting veterans: USAA's Chief Executive Officer, Stuart Parker. For nearly ten years of service in the United States Air Force, he earned his VFW eligibility -- that's right, he's a VFW member -- and bravely flying combat missions during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

After receiving his Wings through the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Program, Parker was selected as an instructor pilot on T-38 Talons and became a Wing Flight Examiner.

He went on to fly the C-141 Starlifter as an instructor aircraft commander.

He finished out his Air Force career in various staff positions at the Air Training Command Headquarters in San Antonio, Texas.

And so at this time, I bring you the head of USAA, a VFW member, Stuart Parker. Stuart?

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMRADE STUART PARKER

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Well, thank you, Commander Biedrzycki. It's just a fantastic opportunity to be here. It's great to be with the VFW, the Auxiliary, your families, special guests. I'm just so grateful for the support that you give veterans and their families.

The VFW and USAA share common missions. Just as you take care of those who have served and advocate on their behalf, USAA, we are here to facilitate the financial security of the military members and their families.

I'd like to share a story with you about one of the veterans we serve. It's a person who was struggling during his transition to civilian life. His name is Master Sergeant Chris Colbert. He's the father of four. He served in the Army for 22 years and was awarded three Bronze Star Medals.

Unfortunately his military career was ended by a roadside bomb. We all know veterans who've had similar experiences.

When Sergeant Colbert returned home, he was suffering from a traumatic brain injury. Unfortunately his marriage was falling apart, and he was feeling overwhelmed. He had a big mortgage, a high-interest car loan, and credit card debt that continued to grow.

In a letter that he wrote to USAA, Sergeant Colbert described himself as a broken man in body and in soul, whose financial life was in shambles. He said at one point when he had a \$500 repair bill for his car, he had to decide whether he was going to fix his car or feed his family. So he turned to USAA to get his life back on track.

And we were able to provide him with the advice and the support that he needed to refinance his car and his mortgage, to consolidate that high-interest debt into a much lower-interest personal loan. But more importantly, we helped him set up a budget and to start saving for his emergency fund.

Well, the good news is that we checked in recently with Sergeant Colbert, and he reported that for the first time in his adult life he has no credit card debt. He's raised his credit score.

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Isn't that amazing? Yes. Thank you.

He's raised his credit score to over 700. And he has over \$8,000 saved in his emergency fund. And now he's taken the step from being a saver to being an investor.

Sergeant Colbert said that USAA invested in him and helped him turn his life around.

Many vets struggle just to simply find a place to rest their head. Being part of USAA has given me and others at USAA the opportunity to serve not only those on active duty but also those veterans who have fallen on hard times.

Across our nation, one out of three homeless individuals are veterans. That means that tonight over 300,000 veterans do not have a safe, comfortable place to sleep. This is a national tragedy.

I recently visited Haven for Hope in San Antonio. It's one of the nation's largest homeless transformational campuses. Each night about 1600 homeless individuals sleep there, and many of them are veterans. And it broke my heart to talk to those people who had bravely served our country. Some of them were lonely and many of them were struggling.

So at USAA, we set a goal, right then and there, to bring an end to veteran homelessness in our home city. We made a \$2 million investment. We teamed up with the city of San Antonio. And I'm proud to announce that this spring, we achieved our goal. If you are a homeless veteran in San Antonio, we have a warm, safe place for you to sleep tonight.

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: And as I was talking to the mayor of Charlotte backstage, they are on the journey as well. And we're going to continue to go beyond San Antonio. We have campuses in Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and Virginia. And we'll turn our attention there next.

But USAA is also committed to helping vets find meaningful work as they transition back to civilian life. Here are some veterans enrolled in a program we have at USAA called VetFIT. These students attend a 22-week internship and training program to become software developers in our IT department.

And through another program, Hiring our Heros, we are working with other companies around the country to tap into that unique value that vets offer. Because we know that vets have a strong work ethic. They have great team-building skills. And they live by their core values.

We know that because at USAA over the last ten years we've hired over 10,000 individuals from the military community.

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Thank you.

And by the way, going forward, our goal is to have over 30 percent of all of our new hires to either be a veteran or a military spouse.

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: We know that financial readiness is a challenge facing many active-duty military members and also veterans.

I can still remember, as a very young boy, my father working to support our family. By day, he served our country as a technical sergeant in the Air Force, and at night and on weekends he worked at a convenience store to help provide for us.

And today over 50 percent of enlisted individuals are living paycheck to paycheck. They're struggling to make ends meet on very modest incomes. And USAA is there to provide tools and advice to help all of our members take financial control of their lives. And that's whether they're paying off debt, saving

for their children's college education, or simply just planning for their own retirement.

This year we will conduct over 1,000 financial readiness presentations at military installations across our country.

Clearly the core values of the VFW and USAA are aligned. And we've only just begun to scratch the surface of what's possible.

I'd like to show you a video of a VFW family who are also USAA members and also highlight one of our USAA employees. Now, this story illustrates better than I ever could the unlimited potential of our partnership. Let's show you the video.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video presentation was shown.)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Wasn't that a heartwarming story?

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Well, by caring for men and women who serve our nation and treating them like individuals, not like numbers, the VFW and USAA is fulfilling our mission together.

We're fortunate to have Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and Pressy Long with us. And I'd just like to ask them to stand so we can recognize them and thank them. Please, they're right here.

(Applause)

COMRADE STUART PARKER: Thank you again, Mr. and Mrs. Barrett. Pressy, thank you for being here today.

Well, on behalf of over 29,000 USAA employees and 11 1/2 USAA members, I just want to thank you again for allowing me to share my thoughts today. We all look forward to accomplishing even greater things in the future. Thank you so much for your time.

(Applause)

PRESENTATION BY JENNIFER YUENGLING AND DAVID CASINELLI OF D. G. YUENGLING & SONS, INCORPORATED

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's so nice to have partners like that. Hopefully by now you're all aware of the VFW's exciting new relationship with America's oldest brewery, D. G. Yuengling & Son, Incorporated. As the largest US-owned brewery, Yuengling has preserved and thrived for more than 185 years because of a foundation built on strong heritage and traditions.

And today the brewery produces and distributes more than 2 million barrels of the highest quality lagers, porters, and ales throughout 19 states, including right here in Carolina.

The VFW is pleased to have forged what is expected to be a longstanding relationship with a company like Yuengling, a company led by Army

veteran, Richard "Dick" Yuengling, Junior. A man dedicated to give back to America's heroes.

And through its recent "Respect. It's earned" campaign, Yuengling has been demonstrating its appreciation and respect for our organization, as well as all those who have served our nation, while engaging and encouraging consumers to join in.

Having served six years with the Pennsylvania National Guard, fifth generation owner, president of D. G. Yuengling & Son, Incorporated, Dick has dedicated more than 30 years of his life to ensuring the survival and success of the family brewery. Well known for the strong leadership, belief in hard work, and passion for innovation.

It's not surprising our next guests have the same passion and vision. Dick's daughter and Vice President of Operations, Jennifer Yuengling, and the Brewery's Chief Operating Officer, David Casinelli, have been working alongside Dick for more than two decades to help ensure the family business flourishes and remains dedicated to enhancing and investing in its local communities, all the while giving back to those who have sacrificed greatly to protect our -- the freedoms we enjoy.

So please give a warm welcome to Jennifer Yuengling, Vice President of Operations, and David Casinelli, Chief Operating Officer of the D. G. Yuengling & Son, Incorporated.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY JENNIFER YUENGLING

MS. YUENGLING: Thank you for that kind introduction, Commander Biedrzycki.

Good morning. It's great to be here. I'm extremely proud and grateful to be here with all of the heroes that are in this room today.

As a sixth generation family member of America's oldest brewery, we would not have remained in business for 187 years if it weren't for the tremendous sacrifices of all of our brave and dedicated servicemen and women.

Our family has some history with regards to sacrificing too. My grandfather, Richard Yuengling, Senior, was the fourth president of our family brewery. He flew 37 missions in World War II as a waist gunner. He was too old to pilot at that time.

And prior to that, he was a volunteer in the Civil Air Patrol. He flew for Coastal Base 4 in Virginia, receiving the Air Medal for service from July 28th, 1942, to August 31st, 1943. We are proud of his service.

(Applause)

MS. YUENGLING: It is our hope that our multi-year partnership with the VFW can inspire more people to support our heroes and derive awareness for the great work that the VFW is doing for our veterans.

Once again, I thank all of you for everything that you have done to keep us and our great nation safe. And without further ado, I would ask Commander Biedrzycki to join me again at the podium.

On behalf of the Yuengling family and all of our employees, it is my honor to present our check for \$100,000 to the VFW organization.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We'll make sure Larry Maher gets that check. I hope the bank accepts that, that size.

Being a Pittsburgher and living in Pennsylvania, I've had the opportunity to sample those fine products. And for those of you that like turtle soup, boy, it goes along great with that too. So couldn't -- couldn't pass up saying that.

We're having a brief change of what we're doing and how we're doing it. So we're concerned about the time frame. It's changing and making it a little better for you. So I hope you'll bear with us.

See, they changed the program and here we go. Excuse me, ladies and -- and gentlemen, my Comrades and sisters.

All right. There we go. As you know, the program is fluid. So I want to make it move as quickly as we can.

*PRESENTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES AWARD
TO ARMY SPECIAL FORCES - GREEN BERETS*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's now my honor and privilege to present the 216th VFW Armed Forces award to the United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne).

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The mission of Special Forces Green Berets is to organize, equip, train, and validate forces to conduct full-spectrum operations in support of the United States Special Operations Command, Geographic Combat Commanders, American Ambassadors, and other governmental agencies.

Their cornerstone unit is the Operational Detachment Alpha, a highly trained team of twelve Special Forces Green Berets who are cross-trained in weapons, communications, intelligence, medicine, and engineering, as well as specialized language and cultural training.

The Green Berets are our nation's premier unconventional warriors who provide a viable option for military requirements that may be inappropriate for large or conventional forces.

The VFW Armed Forces award is awarded annually to active or retired military members or organizations in recognition of extraordinary national security achievements that reflect the highest traditions of service to the Armed Forces of our nation.

Accepting this award on behalf of all Green Berets is the Assistant Commanding General of Army Special Forces Command, Brigadier General Patrick Roberson.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The general hails from Minnesota, and in the 1990s he has commanded positions in northern Iraq for Operation Provide Comfort; and in Bosnia for Operations Joint Guardian and Joint Endeavor; and after 9/11, commanding units back in Iraq several times, as well as in Afghanistan.

Comrades, it's with great pride and honor that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States present its 2016 VFW Armed Forces Award to the United States Army Special Forces (Airborne). Accepting on behalf is General Patrick Roberson.

General?

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Armed Forces Award and Citation awarded to the United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) in special recognition and sincere appreciation to America's Green Berets. From the formation and -- and lessons learned from the Alamo Scouts and Philippine Guerillas to the -- to the First Special Service Force and the officer continued services.

Today's Army Special Forces Green Beret conduct a full spectrum of special operations in support of US national interests, wherever missions dictate, which over the past decade has been into 135 of the world's 195 recognized countries, and mostly in small, twelve-man teams, from unconventional warfare and direct action to counterinsurgency, special reconnaissance, and security force assistance.

Their selfless and continued service to our nation is true to the ideals and traditions and the values of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars this 25th day of July, 2016; approved by the National Council Administration, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY ARMY BRIGADIER GENERAL PATRICK ROBERSON

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERSON: Thank you very much, Chief. I really appreciate it. And on behalf of all Green Berets, past, present, and future, we humbly accept, you know, this award from this great organization, the VFW, doing so much for our veterans out there.

So I am the Assistant Commander, Commanding General for the First Special Forces Command, and really we command all of the Green Berets in the United States Army. Again, our pleasure.

I've got to brag a little bit about our Green Berets that are out there and what they're doing right now. They're operating in 70 different countries, as we speak right now, in small teams, as the Chief talked about, you know, Operational Attachments Alpha.

They're having a great effect on the world. A very small organization but, again, punching way above their weight.

Each one of these individuals goes through a rigorous selection process, more than a year of training, and then they're pushed out there onto a team. And basically they're in a cycle of deployment, training, deployment, training, repeat over and over again. It's a pretty grueling process.

But I will say that these guys love what they're doing. They love the men they get to serve with. And they love the mission. And they're out there representing all of America in the finest, you know, traditions of the military and all of our veterans out there.

So, again, on behalf of all the Green Berets, past, present, and future, I want to thank, you know, the VFW for what they've done for us.

And, again, these are some of the finest men that America has to offer. So rest assured they're out there on the forward edge of freedom representing you and all of our values.

Thank you again. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I wasn't that thin and good looking when I was born. Those guys are the greatest, I tell you.

*PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2016 ALL-AMERICAN
POST, DISTRICT, AND DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, we're going to give our All-American Awards now, and I think that's important. I'm so proud of all of those who have achieved this year and -- and picked up the challenge.

So at this time, we're going to prepare to do our All-American Awards. Can I have the team ready, and we're going to set up how we're going to do this.

Certainly the most prominent association earned as commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All-American team. And today we honor their hard work and dedication. We have 22 Department Commanders, 71 District Commanders, and 272 Post Commanders who have earned the title of distinguishing themselves as the most -- and they're all with us today.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'll be joined by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy; Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman to present the All-American Commander Awards to this elite group.

Mr. Duffy, are you ready? Are you with me?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Fire at will.

ALABAMA - Jerry H. Anger
CALIFORNIA - John J. Vojtas
CALIFORNIA - Douglas A. Scholl
ARKANSAS - Earl D. Duty
CALIFORNIA - Carlon C. Perry
ARIZONA - Thomas M. Landy
CALIFORNIA - John A. Goodrich
ARIZONA - Betty M. Gripp
ARIZONA - Mary A. Reidling
ARIZONA - Derek J. Tramondo
ARKANSAS - Charles R. Noeltner
ARKANSAS - Frank Lee
EUROPE - Lisa Hayman Collins
EUROPE - John L. Leffler
EUROPE - Joseph Gannon
CALIFORNIA - Phil Jimenez
DELAWARE - William J. Rickards
FLORIDA - Kurt B. Schuh
FLORIDA - Anthony W. Gardner
FLORIDA - Glenn M. Wright
FLORIDA - Glen F. Tilley
FLORIDA - Kevin S. Hice
FLORIDA - Mark A. Alvarez
FLORIDA - Oswaldo L. Perez
FLORIDA - Alfred W. Halley
FLORIDA - Dale E. Mangione
FLORIDA - Kevin J. Delaney
FLORIDA - Denis P. Brogan
FLORIDA - Kenneth Greenlee
FLORIDA - John J. Kelleher
GEORGIA - Richard L. Knight
GEORGIA - Gina M. Rhoden
GEORGIA - Stony R. Lohr
GEORGIA - John H. Skinner
GEORGIA - Daniel W. Jenkin
GEORGIA - Fausto R. Tenen
GEORGIA - Rufus A. Burney
GEORGIA - Loren S. Cook
GEORGIA - Earl B. Lewis, Senior

GEORGIA - Sean B. Farrell
GEORGIA - John W. Giles
HAWAII - Joseph F. Bragg
ILLINOIS - William G. Oerly
ILLINOIS - Emanuel Bucur
KANSAS - Todd L. Hokanson
KANSAS - Steven L. Davis
IOWA - Stuart D. Juarez
ILLINOIS - Robert J. Welch
ILLINOIS - Jayson A. Hoffman
IDAHO - Joseph D. Riener
IDAHO - Richard H. Cesler
KANSAS - Hank F. Deters
LOUISIANA - Willie L. Johnson
LOUISIANA - Elvin R. Bass
LOUISIANA - Gregory Dawson
LOUISIANA - Robert J. Lovergne, Junior
LOUISIANA - John D. Thomas
MAINE - Edward J. Roach, Junior
MAINE - Cameron J. Kessler
MARYLAND - Hugh M. Warner
MASSACHUSETTS - Christine B. Bassett
MASSACHUSETTS - Chad R. Cheras
MISSOURI - Rick L. Butler
MISSOURI - Paul R. Schmidt
MISSOURI - Royce R. Kelb
NEBRASKA - Harold Schlender
NEBRASKA - Jeffrey M. Baker
MISSISSIPPI - Edward Corker
MICHIGAN - Stephen D. Klein
NEW MEXICO - Warren G. Booker
OHIO - Charles E. Osborne
OHIO - Jerry T. Jodrey
OHIO - Ronald E. Ward
OHIO - Gerald E. Jones III
OHIO - Robert W. Critell
OHIO - Michael L. Hurley
OHIO - Frank J. Madey
OHIO - William F. Mangus
OHIO - John L. Hunter
OHIO - James A. Tonincasa, Junior
OREGON - Kenneth L. Kraft
NEW JERSEY - Frank Brogna
NEW YORK - William M. Hughes, Junior

NEW YORK - James M. McGovern
NEW YORK - Russell L. Marsden
NORTH CAROLINA - Joseph W. Caradonna
NORTH CAROLINA - Dennis E. Mecum
NORTH CAROLINA - Edward E. Beard
PACIFIC AREAS - Randell E. Himes
PACIFIC AREAS - Casey E. Roberts
PACIFIC AREAS - Michael R. Verville
PENNSYLVANIA - Bob R. Emerick
PENNSYLVANIA - William R. Hewitt
PENNSYLVANIA - William McCrillis
SOUTH CAROLINA - John Marker
TEXAS - Ira M. Hodge
TEXAS - Armando P. Gonzales
TEXAS - Rolando S. Webber
TEXAS - James E. Bishop, Senior
TEXAS - Larry H. Casillas
TEXAS - Steven W. Cook
TEXAS - John M. Tellier
TEXAS - Crisoforo Vieyra, Junior
TEXAS - Armando Garcia
TEXAS - Raymond O. Richardson
TEXAS - Henry P. Lester
TEXAS - Lupita M. Perez
TEXAS - Albert Mireles, Junior
TEXAS - Gilbert R. Uriegas
TEXAS - Jay W. Sanders
TEXAS - Andrew F. Camplen
TEXAS - Juan A. Navejar, Junior
TEXAS - Larry L. Sanders
TEXAS - Randall E. Johnston
TEXAS - Roger L. DeWeese
VERMONT - Paul A. Perreault
VIRGINIA - Douglas M. Iles
VIRGINIA - James E. Kirkpatrick
VIRGINIA - Randall W. Coker
VIRGINIA - Scott P. Seddon
VIRGINIA - Steven L. Braunhausen
VIRGINIA - Beth C. Rowley
VIRGINIA - Jack E. Easter
WASHINGTON - Ronald M. Ness
WASHINGTON - Otis R. Wolfe
WISCONSIN - David C. Green
WEST VIRGINIA - William G. Cusson

WEST VIRGINIA - Melvin Kelly Goddard
WEST VIRGINIA - David R. Ash
WEST VIRGINIA - Stephen D. Mullins
ARIZONA - Michael J. Kemery
ARKANSAS - Donald R. Barnes
CALIFORNIA - Timothy T. Moore
EUROPE - Wayne J. Holder
FLORIDA - Danette J. Hernandez
FLORIDA - Terry L. Guthrie
GEORGIA - Kevin F. Hammond
GEORGIA - Richard J. Hack
GEORGIA - Joseph S. O'Neill
GEORGIA - Jeff Carroll
GEORGIA - Curtis S. Talley
GEORGIA - Kenneth W. Stanis
GEORGIA - David J. Fowler
IDAHO - Rockey A. Davis
ILLINOIS - Jeffrey G. Britt
ILLINOIS - Laurie A. Emmer
KENTUCKY - Richard L. Quire
LOUISIANA - Stephen K. Mainville
LOUISIANA - Wesley S. Mitchell
LOUISIANA - Matthew J. West
LOUISIANA - Michael C. Carroll
MASSACHUSETTS - Brian W. Willette
MISSISSIPPI - Steven D. Strickland
MISSOURI - Steven P. Jones
NEVADA - Edward B. Sturges
NEVADA - Richard A. Marshall
NORTH CAROLINA - Euell H. Griggs
NORTH CAROLINA - Thomas L. Person
NORTH CAROLINA - Craig R. Armstrong
OHIO - Gary L. Feeney
OHIO - Marianne Plummer
PENNSYLVANIA - George P. Fletcher
PENNSYLVANIA - John Winters
TEXAS - Keith R. Foley
TEXAS - Robert Martinez, Junior
TEXAS - Gary C. Bridges
TEXAS - Loren F. Pogue
TEXAS - Richard D. Shawver
TEXAS - Randall E. Johnston
VIRGINIA - Venner F. Milewski
VIRGINIA - Harold M. Schupska

WEST VIRGINIA - Robert L. Haight
WEST VIRGINIA - David M. Moske II
VIRGINIA - Douglas R. Keller
NEW HAMPSHIRE - Lewis A. Chipola
VERMONT - Donald P. Dockter
NORTH CAROLINA - Jessie L. Bellflowers
UTAH - Danny L. Zaharias
MAINE - Gerald L. Francis
IDAHO - Rick W. Johnson
FLORIDA - Amber L. Putnam
ARIZONA - Robert T. Hysko
DELAWARE - Robert W. McVaugh, Junior
ALASKA - Walter W. Watts
OHIO - Christopher W. Haynes
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA - RoseAnn Clark
MISSISSIPPI - Steven M. Organ
NEVADA - Donna M. Barnett
HAWAII - Randy W. Grant
WEST VIRGINIA - Elmer R. Hibbs
GEORGIA - Michael J. O'Steen
TEXAS - Daniel L. West
EUROPE - Lance W. Howard, Senior
LOUISIANA - Gerald G. Snake Dugas

INTRODUCTION OF 2016 ALL-AMERICAN TRIPLE CROWN WINNERS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: On behalf of the Commander-in-Chief it gives me great pleasure in recognizing this year's select groups of VFW Triple Crown winners who are here today.

From the Department of North Carolina, Jessie Bellflowers; Elmer Hibbs from the Department of West Virginia; Lance Howard from the Department of Europe; Michael O'Steen, Department of Georgia; and rounding out this year's class of the Triple Crown winners, from the Department of Texas, Dan West.

Commander's congratulations for attaining such a notable record of accomplishment, and thank you on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief for your hard work and dedication this year.

SPECIAL DEPARTMENT RECOGNITION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: For years individual comrades have been brought to the stage and honored for their tireless recruiting efforts throughout the year.

Today we want to recognize VFW departments that have excelled in this area. I'd like to recognize the Departments that had the largest numerical

increase in members in their conference since the last membership year. Those departments are Ohio from the Big 10 Conference.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Europe from the Eastern States Conference.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And from the Southern Conference, that No. 1 state in the union this year, Louisiana.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Ladies and gentlemen, please give them another warm applause for their department leaders that have joined us on stage to accept these streamers and honor their hard work and dedication.

(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LEGACY LIFE CONTEST WINNERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: As VFW Legacy Life Members, you have the opportunity to leave your mark on America's largest and oldest war veterans organization. Membership in this fraternity is renowned and committed.

VFW members not only offer expanded and exclusive benefits, but also help to ensure the VFW's vital work that'll continue aiding veterans today and well into the future. This is accordingly the true meaning of the word "legacy," and the most prestigious and important award.

Now, therefore, I present a Legacy Society Post Proclamation to this year's top posts. It brings me great pride to acknowledge four posts, each which have earned a Legacy Society Post Proclamation. A recognition of at least 25 Legacy Life Members.

Comrades, please stand as your post is recognized in the audience.

The first one Forsyth County Post 9143 in Cumming, Georgia, for having 25 Legacy Life Members.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The next one is Montgomery County Post 4709, Conroe, Texas, for having 25 Legacy Life Members.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The third is James Jarret Post -- Brown Post 8385 in Kingsland, Georgia, for having 27 Legacy Life Members.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And finally for Jimmy Connors's Post 6311 in Manteca, California, for having 50 Legacy Life Members.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Congratulations on a job well done.

And now, last but not least, I'd like to recognize this year's only post to achieve the notable benchmark of securing more than 100 Legacy Life Members. It gives me great pride to present a Legacy Society Post Proclamation to Mr. Bob Zaier with the Los Angeles Post 2485 in Angeles City, Philippines, for having a remarkable 102 Legacy Life Members.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Congratulations on a job well done.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Legacy Society Post Proclamation, be it known that in recognition of having achieved the notable benchmark of securing 100, or more, Legacy Life Members in your post and contributing to the Memorial Endowment Program of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

This Legacy Society Post Proclamation's issued to Angeles City, Post 2485, as evidence that the said post has required number of Legacy Life Members to warrant this -- to warrant this distinction.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands the official seal of the corporation on the 1st of July, 2016, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Commander-in-Chief; John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFIED NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR 2015-2016 TO KEN KRAFT, POST 12140, DEPARTMENT OF OREGON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: National Recruiter of the Year Award, here it is. It's going to be presented to Kenneth L. Kraft, Department of Oregon, in special recognition and sincere appreciation for his successful, exceptional efforts in recruiting training, as well as recruiting new and reinstated members for this membership year.

Your outstanding performance has earned you the designation of the most distinguished National Recruiter of the Year. You are to be commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to loyalty, honor, and service.

In witness to, I have signed my signature on this 25th day of July. And it's countersigned by John Hamilton, the Adjutant General.

(Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AMERICANISM AWARD TO ARTIST SCOTT LOBAIDO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It is now an honor and a privilege to introduce the recipient of this year's VFW Americanism Award. Mr. Scott Lo-- excuse me, LoBaido, Mr. Scott LoBaido is an American artist known for the thousands of paintings of Old Glory that he has painted on schools, homes, firehouses, police stations, cars, and canvasses.

In 2015, he made it his mission to paint and dedicate a flag mural on a VFW or Legion Post in all 50 states. He dedicated each of the 50 murals to all the men and women who served our great country.

What an amazing tribute and a unique way to say thank you to our service members and our veterans. Each painting, a beautiful 3D version of our beloved star spangled banner, carefully crafted on the facade of a veterans service post not only inspires patriotism in communities across the country, but reminds Americans to say "thank you" and "welcome home" to all who served.

Taking less than a year to accomplish his feat, in August, 2015, Scott LoBaido completed his mission. And in his own words, he left a small token of preserved American symbolism behind. But the veterans I saluted left more with me. It's about pride, honor, and appreciation for all Americans who serve our nation.

To truly showcase how Mr. Scott LoBaido has gone above and beyond to instill patriotism and appreciation for service members everywhere, let us turn our attention to the screens for a very short video clip.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video was shown at this time.)

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And now it gives me great pleasure to express to him our most sincere appreciation. I present to you the recipient of this year's VFW Americanism award. This is Scott LoBaido.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Americanism Award and Citation awarded to Scott LoBaid- -- LoBaido, American artist, in special recognition and sincere appreciation of his commitment and dedication to honoring American's service members and veterans.

By applying his artistic talent and creating prevalent American symbolism in communities across all 50 states, he has ensured those who protect our flag and freedoms are not forgotten. His volunteerism, patriotism, and commitment to American values have earned him the utmost respect and appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 25th day of July, 2016, approved by the National Council Administration, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And here he is, Scott LoBaido.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY SCOTT LOBAIDO

MR. LOBAIDO: Thank you. Wow, I am really humbled by this. I'm not a good speaker. I – I express my words on canvas, is what I do. So please forgive me. Plus, most of us artists are usually sleeping at this hour. So I'm -- I'm going to do the best I can.

I did see the list of the other recipients of this incredible award, and I am just amazed that I am with this bracket of great patriots.

I'm from New York City, a little town called Staten Island. Have we got anybody in here?

(Applause)

MR. LOBAIDO: All right. New York City is one of the biggest art communities in the world. I've been an artist since childhood. But this so-called tolerant art world didn't treat me too well. They treated me like the ugly stepchild. It was because of my pro-American activism and my somewhat conservative-leaning ideology.

But I've learned to love being that stepchild because it means I've done something right. Outside the box is very difficult. But it's a lot more rewarding. And as you can see by the biggest flag that was ever painted, I don't like doing things easy.

This great honor that you have bestowed upon me and my work proves that I did make the right choice in my career. This choice in my creative life was the result of a couple events.

Back in 1993, the first World Trade Center attack only killed six people, and the story quickly faded. But I learned about these people out there who hate us and what we stand for. And that was embedded in my mind.

And then sometime short after, in the mid '90s I went to find myself in the big city art world to find my niche as an artist. And I saw this hatred and this anti-Americanism right here in our country, in the creative community, which just I couldn't understand it.

I come from a flag-waving community of Staten Island. I just -- I could not wrap my brain around these fellow Americans -- not all of them -- that were blaming America for everything, disrespecting our veterans and our military and -- and that to fly that flag was taboo or uncool.

And then, bam, that's when it hit me, punched me right in the face. This is my calling. Here it is. This is what I'm going to do. I'm going to use these hands and my talent and I'm going to bring light upon the goodness of America.

(Applause)

MR. LOBAIDO: The beauty of that flag. I'm going to paint it everywhere. I'm going to paint it big and bold and huge and in a public square and on cars and houses and places where I shouldn't paint it.

And I did. And I didn't stop. Even the critics, the art critics, were tearing me apart. A jingoist, a fascist, a Nazi, you know, and so on. But I kept going on. And it was like pulling teeth to get people to let me paint those big flag murals.

Then 9/11 happened. And since that tragic day in my hometown, I can't keep up with the demand for my flag work. Sad that it took 9/11 to get people

to fly the Colors with pride, but it's a good thing. And we need it now more than ever.

Many fellow artists asked me, throughout my career, "Why this flag, Scott? What's with this flag thing? You could paint anything you want. You're so talented. Why this flag?"

And I responded, I said, "Listen, I'm an artist. I flirted eye to eye with the Mona Lisa at the Louvre in France. I have gazed at the amazing Sistine Chapel. I sat on the foot of the statue of David. I shouldn't have, but I did.

(Laughter)

MR. LOBAIDO: These are the masters. I've seen them all, this works of art. But the greatest, most beautiful, powerful, sexiest work of art is the Star Spangled Banner.

(Applause)

MR. LOBAIDO: I didn't invent this glorious masterpiece. I am just a promoter to reproduce it and celebrate it as big and as much as I can until the day I die. Is Old Glory better than every other flag? You damn right she is.

Let me tell you why. It's very simple. America's the melting pot of this world. A recipe of every single organic culture from every corner of this planet, like no other place in the world. People are lined up so far and deep to come to this thing called freedom. And those stars and stripes represent that incredible human concept.

I graciously accept this honor, but I only want a little piece of it because I must share this with so many other people who do the same exact thing as me but with a different form, like the Tunnel to Towers Foundation; Building for America's Bravest; the Indie Fund; adopt-a-soldier program; the Gary Sinise Foundation; Fisher House.

There's 100 more great ones and so many others who cater to our veterans and promote Americanism, which is so important now.

(Applause)

MR. LOBAIDO: I share this award with my -- thank you.

I share this award with my awesome, patient parents who dealt with my creative insanity all these years and let me follow my own crazy path. I'm the middle child so they really had no choice.

And everyone else -- my family, my girlfriend, the people around me that keep inspiring me to keep doing this, and everybody in this room. Everyone in this room who added to my life being so great. Look where I am. Look at me. I'm on stage. I've got this piece of gold. It's awesome. This is incredible.

Before I close -- before I close, on a serious note, I'd like to take this opportunity to bring attention to a vital cause -- and there's so many of them -- but this one just breaks my heart.

You know, it's so awesome to see all these organizations helping -- helping our veterans, especially the physically disabled and the severely injured. But every morning I write this number with a Sharpie on the palm of my hand to remind this lucky civilian how lucky I am and how unlucky this number is. 22.

22. 22 veterans commit suicide each and every day in this country. That is sad and I find it disgusting.

I don't know how to fix it. We have to get together. We have to acknowledge this. I am going to do my part and go on another 50-state tour this year to purposely bring attention to this. So hopefully we can all do a little something. Yes, we have so much, but let's bring this number down to zero. I want to write a zero on my hand.

(Applause)

MR. LOBAIDO: And in closing, I thank God for the gift to create. I thank my parents and my talent, and I thank the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America for that right they gave me to express it. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

(Standing ovation)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: All right. Our guest is landing and will be here shortly. So we're going to have about a 20-minute break here so they can get -- people have to clear the stage and some things have to be done.

So now would be a great time to use the restroom if you need to. If all you-all can figure out how to do it at once, good luck. But we're going to have about a 20-minute break. Okay?

(A recess was taken.)

*INTRODUCTION OF GRAYSON CAMPBELL FIRST PLACE
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, it is my honor to present one of our cornerstone programs and the winner this year of our Voice of Democracy program, Grayson Campbell.

For nearly 70 years, the Voice of Democracy program has been an inspiring program inspiring America's youth. For those of you that are not aware of it or familiar with it, this program provides students the opportunity to speak clearly on their values and give voice to how they perceive our nation and the many liberties afforded to them.

What is reflected in this program is an extension of America's values and its ideals. This premier scholarship program helps ensure our nation's heritage will never be lost.

Student interest is what keeps the program going. And in time, that interest will be displayed in the form of leadership. And that leadership will help guide our nation for future generations to come. Education and knowledge are indeed the best weapons against any type of tyranny. And these young people are well armed to face the challenges of America's futures.

It is clear that not only will they be contributing to America's future, but they indeed will also be writing their very own chapter in America's history book.

Of all the VFW program, none provides a better perspective of what our future holds than the submission made to the Voice of Democracy program.

This year's winner, Mr. Grayson Campbell's, outstanding entry based on the theme picked by our Commander-in-Chief, "My Vision of America," earns him the esteemed title of the 2015-2016 National Voice of Democracy winner and also a \$30,000 college scholarship.

Grayson represents the many thousands of young people who participate in this scholars program annually, and he and his peers are truly the future of our country. What they are today America will be tomorrow.

Please give a warm VFW Auxiliary welcome in celebrating Grayson Campbell's achievement as the 2015-2016 VFW Voice of Democracy winner. Grayson?

(Applause)

SPEECH BY GRAYSON CAMPBELL FIRST PLACE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER

MR. GRAYSON CAMPBELL: Good morning, everyone.

(Good morning)

MR. GRAYSON CAMPBELL: Before I entered this contest, I recognized what veterans have done for our country. But over this past year or two, because of the Voice of Democracy contest, I have witnessed continued selflessness and giving from our veterans.

For instance, like one -- one of our local posts raised \$800 to purchase an adapted bike for a special needs child.

(Applause)

MR. GRAYSON CAMPBELL: That's when I realized that our veterans haven't just served our country, but you continue to serve your communities every day.

(Applause)

MR. GRAYSON CAMPBELL: Through this essay contest, I also appreciate how you are helping to promote our youth. And as a representative from my own generation, I say thank you. And as my essay demonstrates, please know that we are watching and that we look up to you.

Thank you for this honor to be here and to present you with my essay on "My Vision for America."

In 1997, I became an American. I was born into freedom and have been afforded rights and opportunities that so many around the world will never experience. But what I wasn't born with was the heart of an American.

My patriot's heart journey began many years ago when I was a middle school student attending a Veterans Day ceremony. During the ceremonial march of the Color Guard and presentation of the American flag, I noticed an elderly gentleman in partial uniform seated directly in front of me, struggling to get up on his feet from his wheelchair.

A younger woman next to him assisted the frail gentleman to stand. And when he straightened up, he took off his veterans cap and placed his hand over his heart.

I will never forget that man because he became the model of what I wish we would all have, a patriot's heart.

Now, I don't remember much about that ceremony or who spoke because I stared at that gentleman, wondering why he would bother to stand in honor of Old Glory and why tears filled his eyes as the speaker talked about World War II.

Soon after that, I began to understand as I read the stories about World War II and I studied other conflicts, like the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, World War I, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. By studying history, my heart for this country transformed as I learned how our country was woven from threads spun from conflicts and how our nation was built on the backs of those who sacrificed much and carried the Colors for all of us.

Now, I also studied dictators like Mao Zedong, Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini. And I came to understand the astounding worth of our nation and the extraordinary wisdom of those who founded this, the greatest nation on earth.

Knowing how fortunate I was to live in the land of the free and the home of the brave, my patriot's heart grew more grateful.

My vision for America is that each citizen of this outstanding nation will have a patriot's heart, for a patriot's heart knows and appreciates our history and will never want to forget how we got here or whose shoulders we stand on.

A patriot's heart knows what our flag stands for and will not dare sit when Old Glory is presented.

A patriot's heart loves this country, defends its liberty, seeks the greater good, and will never allow our God-given inalienable rights to be restricted.

A patriot's heart realizes the sacrifices that it took to make our nation great and will never allow those who have defended freedom to be forgotten.

So a patriot's heart reveres and salutes our veterans. Instead of buying a T-shirt printed with Captain America or one of the Kardashians, a patriot's heart would prefer to honor a veteran by putting him or her on a T-shirt and telling his or her story of service and sacrifice.

Lastly, a patriot's heart embraces three hallowed words spoken over 50 years ago by General Douglas MacArthur, "Duty, honor, country."

When I think of duty, honor, and country, I'm reminded once again of that gentleman in front of me at that Veterans Day ceremony who demonstrated a true patriot's heart. I would love to wear a shirt to honor him, but I never knew his name. However, I did learn some of his story.

Following that ceremony, I learned that he had served in Germany during World War II, and that he had actually brought a photo album with him from his time there. In that album were photos and newspaper clippings of the concentration camp that he helped liberate during World War II.

The pictures I remember most were those of train cars with open doors, stacked high with bloated, bald, naked bodies. My young mind could not even begin to process the horrors and lack of humanity because life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was all that I had ever known.

What I did realize at that time was that the will and the moral courage of our veterans, our patriot's hearts defeated evil back then.

That is why my vision for America is that each citizen of this great nation will have a patriot's heart. Because then, just like in generations past, we will be able to overcome any struggle.

The wise words of Ronald Reagan have never been more clear, "Freedom is never more than one generation from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

Yes, Mr. Reagan, it is not passed in the bloodstream, but it can and it must be passed in the heart, a patriot's heart.

God bless America and all of our men and women in uniform, past and present.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Doesn't he embody everything we know this program to be? A great young American.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those are very poignant words from our youth. And let me just give you a commercial again. I need you to go back to the schools. I need you to go and reach out in your community and continue to make the Voice of Democracy the opportunity for our youth to speak up about how they think and feel about living in the greatest country in the world, America.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Won't you do that? Go back and support the programs in your departments.

INTRODUCTION OF JARED LYON STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Now, our next guest, Jared Lyon, is a veteran of the United States Navy.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And he served as a submariner and a diver. Does that term bobblehead come up? Okay. God bless him. Took part in multiple deployments in support of global war on terrorism and was recently appointed president and CEO of Student Veterans of America.

The Student Veterans of America, or SVA, is an outstanding organization that joined with the VFW to help our veterans succeed as they pursue a higher education.

SVA's vision is one we truly believe in, that all veterans will succeed in higher education, achieve their academic goals, and gain meaningful employment. And the VFW is supporting that vision along the way.

Hundreds of VFW posts have already teamed up with local SVA chapters and are shaping our vast resources to help them succeed any way we can.

Further, SVA members are being given the chance to learn the importance of our organization and get involved. They are the future of this country. They are the future of our organization. And so we want to send the right message to the future, don't we?

If your post hasn't already reached out to its local SVA chapter, I encourage you to do so immediately.

Following the convention, members of SVA are undoubtedly the future leaders of the VFW. So now please join me in welcoming their new CEO, an outstanding veteran and a true American patriot, Jared Lyon.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And I – I certainly want to tell you, while he's standing next to me, this is their motto: "Yesterday's warriors, today's scholars, tomorrow's leaders."

Thank you, Jared.

MR. JARED LYON: Thank you, John.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY MR. JARED LYON STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA

MR. JARED LYON: Good morning, everyone.

(Good morning)

MR. JARED LYON: I think we can do better. Good morning, everyone.

(Good morning)

MR. JARED LYON: Outstanding. I'd like to thank VFW National Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, Auxiliary National President Francisca Guilford, VFW Adjutant General John Hamilton, and VFW Washington Office Executive Director Bob Wallace.

I'd also like to congratulate incoming leadership for the VFW's Senior Vice Commander Brian Duffy and Auxiliary Senior Vice President Colette Bishop. I look forward to working with both of you in the coming year toward the continued success of veterans and higher education, as well as their family members.

Additionally, I'd like to acknowledge Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier who's helped facilitate much of the VFW's work on behalf of student veterans. Thanks for all that you've done, Jim, and all that you continue to do.

Also, my home state of Florida, the Florida Department, I'd like to acknowledge them.

(Applause)

MR. JARED LYON: There they are.

I'd also like to thank the staffs of both the VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City and the Washington, DC, office for all that they do day-to-day to support veterans and higher education.

And, specifically, I'd like to thank Ryan DeLucie and Ken Wiseman at the DC office.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to thank the man that originally brought me into the fold of the VFW, and my home post, Post 3308, Tallahassee, Florida.

When I was a student veteran at Florida State back in 2010, it was our post commander at the time, Mark Alvarez, now the National – Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Committee, and his beautiful wife Marilyn, who were not only leaders in the VFW but also in their community.

They welcomed me and my brothers and sisters of arms into the post. They groomed us for leadership positions both on campus and off campus, and they treated us like family.

From the bottom of my heart, Mark, Marilyn, thank you for all the support you've given me and, just like me, student veterans across the country.
(Applause)

MR. JARED LYON: SVA is a national coalition of student veteran groups all across the country, in all 50 states, and four countries. But the idea of veterans in higher education bonding together on behalf of each other is not a new concept.

Student veterans have been organizing themselves since World War II, when our brothers and sisters returned home from Europe and the Pacific and began harnessing the transformative power of higher education by using the original GI Bill, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in 1944.

In 1954 military veterans returned home from the forgotten war in Korea. They joined student veterans on campuses to provide peer-to-peer support and change their colleges and universities to be more supportive towards Korean War veterans.

Fast-forward to 1972 when troops returned home, largely to an unwelcoming campus and society. Protests on campus caused Vietnam veterans to come together to provide peer-to-peer support to ensure that as student veterans they would succeed in higher education and beyond.

And now, over four decades later, veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have come together. And in 2008, student veterans from 20 different colleges and universities across the country gathered in Chicago, Illinois, to unite under one banner. Student Veterans of America was born.

From those original 20 colleges and chapters over the past eight years, SVA has grown to a national network of almost 1,400 chapters in all 50 states and four countries.

(Applause)

MR. JARED LYON: Thank you. Where there is an SVA chapter, a little over 550,000 student veterans are hard at work completing their degrees. And at present, there are just over 1.1 million veterans in higher education.

This -- this is incredible growth, but we did not do this alone. It's the help of the VFW that's attributed to our growth and strength as a national organization. The VFW has been ensuring that veterans will have the opportunity to obtain college degrees through the GI Bill when we return home from service. And they've been doing it since World War II.

And when my generation of veterans began returning home from service, the VFW, SVA, and a number of other veterans service organizations tirelessly advocated for the overhaul of the GI Bill to address the needs of the 21st century student veteran.

Six months after SVA's founding in 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law the post 9/11 GI Bill. And that effort continued when the VFW, SVA, and others worked to pass in-state tuition. Thanks to this law and the VFW, no student veteran will pay out-of-state tuition with their GI Bill ever again.

(Applause)

MR. JARED LYON: I believe that all generations of veterans, past and present, can work to support each other. And I'm confident the VFW and SVA are prime examples of multiple generations of veterans working together to support each other. Whether it's the VFW posts or the SVA chapter level, on up to the national level, we can accomplish more together than we ever could apart.

So who are today's student veterans? Over 80 percent of us are over the age of 25 when we're back on campus. Nearly half of us are married when we go back to school, and some 46 percent of us have children, with about 14 percent of us identifying as single parents.

26 percent of today's student veterans are our sisters in arms, women. Nearly two-thirds of student veterans work part-time or full-time while we're in school. And that same amount, nearly two-thirds of us, are first-generation college students.

We are succeeding in our studies with national graduation rates at or above that of our civilian counterparts. And we are holding our own in the classroom with a national college GPA of 3.35.

Many are shocked to learn that the number one major for student veterans is STEM: Science, technology, engineering, and math, followed closely by business.

So it comes as no surprise that we know tomorrow's leaders are student veterans, and they're currently on America's college campuses standing by ready to lead.

Student veterans are not without their challenges in higher education. But what SVA sees across the country is that veterans are facing those challenges head-on.

At SVA we envision a future for this country that is even brighter than our storied past. And we know that veterans will play a critical role in making that a reality.

That's why we are proud at SVA to partner with the VFW for the third consecutive year in a row for the VFW SVA Legislative Fellowship Program. This program allows a new generation of veterans the opportunity to ensure that their voices are heard on Capitol Hill and in their communities.

Selected VFW SVA Legislative Fellows will be flown to Washington, DC, to participate in the VFW National Legislative Conference February 26th to March 3rd in 2017. During that time, they will walk the halls of Congress, educating their legislators on the issues facing today's student veterans, alongside their selected mentors from the VFW National Legislative Committee.

Our VFW SVA fellows will have an additional opportunity to meet with policymakers from federal agencies responsible for implementing veterans policy, as well as reporters who cover military and veteran affairs.

Past VFW SVA Legislative Fellows have earned academic credit for their experience, as well as found internships and accepted additional academic opportunities and landed jobs as a result of their fellowship experience.

Robert, who's a 2014 VFW SVA Fellow shared his takeaways from this experience and said, "It's hard to nail down the biggest benefit of the fellowship. Was it the new friends and allies that I made, the lobbying experience, or the newfound appreciation that I discovered for the VFW? For me, I guess in the end it's a little bit of all of that."

And that's the power of our two organizations working together. Personally, I owe a great deal and a great debt to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. When I joined the VFW in 2010 at Post 3308 in Tallahassee, Florida, they became instrumental to the success of my SVA Chapter at Florida State University.

In 2010, my university did not have all of the resources, facilities, and support that we needed. But the VFW was there for us. They opened their doors to us and they welcomed us. And they allowed us to use the post for meetings before we had a Veterans Center on campus.

After class, the post was a great place to study. And the post became the go-to spot to host our events and experience the camaraderie that we all missed after our military service.

No matter what one of our student veterans needed, the VFW was there for us.

Over time, student veterans at my campus became members of the VFW and began taking on leadership roles in the post. I'm evidence of that as I stand before you a proud former Junior Vice Commander of Post 3308 in Tallahassee, Florida.

(Applause)

MR. JARED LYON: So esteemed comrades and friends of the VFW, in conclusion, help us at SVA as we continue to carry on that torch of leadership

and move it forward. Help light the path for other veterans to follow. And help yesterday's warriors become today's scholars and, most assuredly, tomorrow's leaders. Thank you all very much.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Quite a guy. He's a Florida boy. Not that I'm prejudiced.

Listen, we just got word that Ms. Clinton has landed. Hillary Clinton has landed. She's on the way. She's about five minutes out. So we're going to just remain in place, if you would. Visit among yourself, and they'll be here shortly. Okay?

(A recess was taken.)

*INTRODUCTION OF PRESUMPTIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE HILLARY CLINTON*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades and sisters, will you help me welcome to this convention Hillary Rodham Clinton.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Please be seated. Our next guest is the first -- first lady ever elected to public office and is the first New York -- the first New Yorker to ever serve as the Senate Armed Service Forces Committee, which she did for eight years in the United States Senate from the Empire State.

She last appeared before us in 2007 as a candidate for president of the United States and before moving on to serve our nation as its Secretary of State in the first Obama Administration.

I'd like to also point out that she is a former First Lady, married to Bill Clinton, our past president. Originally from Chicago, she graduated from Wellesley College and Yale Law School and is married to former, as I said, Bill Clinton. Enough times? I think so.

Comrades and Auxiliary Members, may I present to you the presumptive Democratic Party nominee to become the next president of the United States, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

*SPEECH BY PRESUMPTIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE HILLARY CLINTON*

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: Thank you so much, Commander.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Thank you very much, Commander, for that very warm welcome. Thanks to your Executive Director, Bob Wallace, and all the men and women of the VFW, of the Auxiliary, for your commitments, your service, and your action on behalf of America's veterans.

This is the 117th National Convention. That is quite a legacy. And in that time, the VFW has built a record to be proud of.

You have been a moving force behind hallmark achievements, like the creation of the VA; the passage of the GI Bill; the establishment of national monuments dedicated to those who fought in World War II, the Korean War, the war in Vietnam, women in military service, and veterans disabled for life.

These monuments are sacred places. I've been to many of them. Also to our cemeteries around the world. People come to sit quietly, maybe lay a flower or a letter or other memento, to reflect on the courage and sacrifice of those who fought for our nation and our ideals. I don't think it is an overstatement for me to say those memorials might not exist if it weren't for you.

So thank you. And thank you for standing up today and every day for veterans' health, for veterans' education, for the right of all veterans to dignity and security. And thank you for continuing to push our nation to live up to our obligations to those who serve.

I've been a direct beneficiary of your expertise and commitment. Some of my top advisers are members of the VFW. I'm grateful to all the veterans and retired military leaders who have shared their knowledge and counsel with me. I especially want to thank the VFW for the close consultation you provided as we work to put forth our plan to reform the VA.

Today I especially want to acknowledge and appreciate Retired Marine General John Allen, former Deputy Commander of the US Central Command and the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force, overseeing NATO troops in Afghanistan. I had the great privilege of working with General Allen. And, therefore, I am deeply honored that he endorsed me this morning.

His confidence in me, and that of the other esteemed military leaders who support my campaign, means a great deal to me. But it also imposes a high responsibility on me as well.

So I thank you. I thank you for what you've done behind the scenes, as well as in public, to make sure that America keeps our promises, honors our history, and gives our veterans the respect and the opportunities they've earned.

A lot of the issues you have fought for are at stake in this election. America is grappling with big questions:

How do we keep our country safe?

How do we make the world safer?

How do we make sure we give our troops what they need to see their missions through; and when they come home, that they have the support and access to services they need to lead healthy, productive, successful lives?

These challenges matter to me personally, not only as the proud daughter of a veteran. My father, Hugh Rodham, enlisted in the Navy shortly after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He became a chief petty officer responsible for training thousands of young sailors before they shipped out to sea, mostly to the Pacific theater.

After my father died in 1993, I received letters and old photos from men who had served under him, talking about what a difference my dad made in their lives. These are letters that I treasure.

My dad once told me how sad he felt when he left Great Lakes Naval Base and accompanied his trainees to the West Coast to join their ships. He knew some of these bright, energetic, young men wouldn't survive. Some of them probably thought it too. But still they went to serve because they knew our country needed them.

That's the kind of courage and honor our men and women in uniform demonstrate every single day.

I thought a lot about my father's experiences later when I became a senator from New York serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and then as Secretary of State. I've worked hard over the years, on many of the issues you care about and work on every day. I am not a newcomer to these issues. And today I want to tell you a few of my core beliefs, which will guide me if I have the great honor to be elected this fall.

Because Americans aren't just choosing a president. We're also choosing a commander-in-chief, the person who decides questions of war and peace, life and death. There's no more solemn or serious a responsibility than that. So you deserve to know what we candidates believe about national security and how we go about making life-or-death calls. Because they will affect our men and women in uniform, first and foremost. And they will affect our veterans.

Let's start here. I believe the United States of America is an exceptional nation with capabilities that no other country comes close to matching. And we have --

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: We have the world's greatest military. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: We also have an economy that is larger, more durable, and more entrepreneurial than any other on the planet.

And we are guided by values that have long inspired people across the world, a commitment to freedom and equality, justice, and diversity, that fundamental American idea that every single person deserves to be treated decently and with respect, no matter who they are.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: I believe in standing with our allies because they are part of what makes us exceptional. No other country in the world has relationships like we do.

Generations of American troops fought and, yes, died to secure those bonds, because they knew we were safer with more friends and partners and fewer adversaries and enemies.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: Our men and women in uniform carry that work forward today.

My running mate in this election is a wonderful man from Virginia named Tim Kaine. He's a US Senator. He was Governor of Virginia, Mayor of Richmond, Virginia. If you're not familiar with him yet, I urge you to check him out. He's a great public servant and a terrific guy.

His son is a Marine. His son is actually deploying today to help defend our NATO allies in Europe. That's how committed he is -- and many others are - to our alliances, and we should be too. After all, America's word has to mean something.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: I believe in being firm but wise with our rivals, finding common ground where we can, and standing our ground when we must.

That's the balance that made it possible for me to work with all kinds of nations to work to increase pressure on North Korea; to work to stand up to the Chinese in the South China Sea; to work with Russia to conclude the new START treaty that reduces nuclear stockpiles, while standing up to them because of their threats to our friends in Eastern Europe.

One thing for certain you will not ever hear from me is praise for dictators and strong men who have no love for America.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: And, yes, I believe with all my heart in democracy. And I believe in diplomacy. It's often the only way to avoid conflicts that can end up exacting a much greater cost.

I believe the most sacred responsibility of a commander-in-chief is deciding whether to send men and women into battle.

I have visited our troops in theaters of war and tension. I know how serious this is. Force must only be used as a last resort, and only with a clear and well-thought-out strategy. Our troops deserve nothing less. America expects nothing less.

I believe our troops strive to comport themselves with honor. And they deserve a commander-in-chief who will never order them to commit war crimes.

I believe in listening to our generals and admirals because they have invaluable knowledge and experience, and they're doing one of the most important jobs there is: Commanding America's sons and daughters. As commander-in-chief, I will always show them respect and hear them out.

You will never hear me say that I only listen to myself on national security.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: I believe in doing everything we can to meet threats at home and abroad. I know we live in a dangerous world. That's why we need real plans, real strategies to deal with terrorism, including homegrown terrorism. I've worked with experienced people from across different fields, and

indeed across the political spectrum, to come up with comprehensive strategies for these and other threats.

I will be ready to get to work on day one. I take nothing more seriously than our security.

Most of all, I believe in American leadership. I believe that who we are as a people, the values that we hold dear, the history that we care about matters a great deal. I'm not interested in talking provocatively. I'm not interested in insulting people, including our military. I'm interested in bringing our country together. I'm interested in healing the divisions.

We have to protect ourselves against terrorists. To do that, we need to lead other countries in stopping ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other radical jihadist groups. We shouldn't leave that to the rest of the world to figure out on their own. That won't keep us safe.

We need a strong global economy, because it's good for American jobs and exports. That means we should lead in setting and enforcing the rules. If we retreat on either security or the economy, behind some kind of imaginary wall, we will have lost our leadership, our purpose, our chance to prevail in the 21st century.

And if America doesn't lead, we leave behind a vacuum. And that will either cause chaos or enable other countries to rush in to fill that void. Then they will be the ones making decisions about American lives, jobs, and safety. And the choices, make no mistake about it, might well not be to our benefit. That's not an outcome we can live with.

I have set forth plans and strategies for dealing with these threats. I know how challenging it will be to meet the difficulties that we face in the world today. But you see, I have confidence. I have optimism. I don't understand people who trash-talk about America, who talk about us as being in decline, who act as though we are not yet the greatest country that has ever been created on the face of the earth for all of history.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: If you want somebody who will scapegoat other people, peddle fear, and smear, I'm not your candidate. I'm interested in bringing everybody together, rolling up our sleeves and getting to work to solve our problems. That's why in the Senate, I worked closely with Republicans.

Now, as some of you might know, I have been, oh, the recipient of numerous political attacks for a very long time. I've learned to live with that. I have, as Eleanor Roosevelt advised many years ago, "If a woman wants to be in the public arena, you better develop skin as thick as the hide of a rhinoceros."

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: So when I got to the Senate, I didn't say, "Oh, I'm only going to talk to Democrats. I'm not going to work with Republicans." How silly would that be?

I was elected to represent the great Empire State. And I wanted to do everything I could to produce results for the people who honored me by electing

me to be their senator. So I worked with Republicans to increase the benefit paid to family members of the fallen; to expand veterans' access to military health insurance; to make sure that all members of the Reserves and National Guard and their families had access to TRICARE military health benefits, even when they were not deployed.

I introduced the Heroes at Home Act to establish new services for military members and veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries.

I fought successfully in 2007 to amend the 2007 Defense Appropriation Act, to establish a training program for family caregivers helping their loved ones with TBI.

I did all of this because I had met so many wonderful people who were struggling, struggling because they lost a son or a daughter, a mother, a father, a wife or a husband; struggling because their loved one came home and didn't have the care that he or she needed. They deserved more support from all of us. And I, fortunately, was in a position to advocate for them.

I joined forces with Senator John McCain to personally raise money for the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, which helped build a state-of-the-art rehab facility in San Antonio to help our seriously-wounded service members coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: And let me just say it was a pleasure to work with Senator McCain on that project and many others. I believe that he, and all American prisoners of war, are heroes and deserve the respect that that entails.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: As president, I will build on the work I've done.

We're going to have a 21st century Department of Veteran Affairs that delivers world-class care.

Like you, I was outraged by the VA scandals. People waiting months, even years for things like wheelchairs and basic medication. Some even dying while languishing on a waitlist for an appointment. Heartbreaking and absolutely unacceptable.

That's why I have put forth a detailed plan about what I would do as president to revamp the VA. It will be one of my highest priorities. But I will tell you this: We are not going to privatize the VA. We are going to reform it and make it work for every single veteran in America.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: We will ensure access to timely, quality care; improve the coordination of care, which is, as you know, a huge problem still; improve care for women veterans who are often underserved.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: Tackle and at long last end the epidemic of veteran suicides by expanding access to mental health care, erasing the stigma that still prevents too many from getting the help they need.

I know this is a high priority for the VFW and other veteran service organizations. And I will do everything in my power to support you in this critical work.

And we're going to help more veterans looking for jobs with expanded tax credits for businesses that hire veterans; more support to veterans who want to start their own businesses; better certification and credentialing programs so the work that veterans did on active duty will be understood and respected as they compete for the jobs in the civilian sector that they deserve to be considered for and hired to perform.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: And I'm going to crack down on companies that prey on or discriminate against veterans. They should be ashamed of themselves. And we are going to hold them accountable.

We will also follow the lead of cities like New Orleans, Houston, Philadelphia, and Las Vegas, which have worked to end veteran homelessness.

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: We have lessons to learn from them. Many more cities are making progress toward that same goal. We should support them and end the tragedy of veteran homelessness once and for all.

And I will protect, preserve, and defend the post-9/11 GI Bill. It has opened doors of opportunity to more than one million veterans and family members. Unfortunately, there are some Republicans in Congress chipping away at it. That's not just wrong. It is shortsighted.

This program helps us recruit and retain the all-volunteer force we need to protect our country. And it's a way to invest in families and our shared future. We should protect and strengthen it, not let anyone erode it.

So, yes, I have plans to do all this and more; including supporting military spouses as they seek to build careers; including standing with women, standing with LGBT veterans to make sure they get the support they've earned.

You can go to my Web site, and I hope you will, HillaryClinton.com and read all the details. I hope you will not only because I want you to know, but there's a lot of expertise in this room. And I want your ideas too.

I have this old-fashioned notion: If you run for president, you should tell people what you want to do as specifically as possible so they can actually make up their minds. And then you should be held accountable as to whether or not you deliver results.

So here's my bottom line: This is something that I care deeply about. But I know a lot of veterans still feel invisible, powerless, like their country has forgotten them. That is just totally wrong. It's unacceptable and we have to work together to make sure we end that.

Now, we can disagree about the details. I'm sure we will from time to time. You see, I actually believe, as someone who's been in public life and public service, it's better if we have honest, candid conversations. That's the best way

in a democracy for us to come up with the best solutions. But we should be guided by our values.

We can all agree that our troops deserve serious, strategic leadership. We can all agree we have to be serious and committed in addressing the complex challenges we face here at home and around the world. Beneath whatever disagreements we might have as a country about how to get where we need to go, surely we can start listening to one another again, respecting one another, our individual experiences that bring so much to the debate.

My father made sure I understood that the freedoms and rights we enjoy as Americans didn't come out of thin air. People sacrificed for them; fought, bled, and died for them. People like you, and the generations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who've made our country strong, proud, and free.

All of you, everyone who has served, deserve our thanks and, more importantly, our respect. And you deserve a country and a president and commander-in-chief who honor your service, not just with words but with deeds. That's what the VFW has stood for, to make sure America lives up to that standard.

And as president, I will be working alongside you, as I did as senator, to make sure that we produce results. I know this is the first time that one of our two major parties has ever nominated a woman. And I know --

(Applause)

MRS. HILLARY CLINTON: -- that it takes a little getting used to, even for me. But here's what I want you to know: I will get up every single day in the White House doing everything I possibly can to protect our country; to treat our men and women in uniform with the care and concern and respect they deserve; to make good on our nation's promises to our veterans. That's how I was raised. That's what I have done. And I promise you that's what I will do.

Thank you, VFW. God bless you and God bless the United States of America. Thank you you-all very much.

(Applause)

(A lunch recess was taken.)

*FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 25, 2016*

(The First Business Session of the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was called to order in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, at 1:35 p.m. by Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'd like to call the house to order. Please take your seats so we can start conducting business. We'll now reconvene to our Business Session.

To begin the program, we had to make those changes. I think it needs some explanation. You realize as well as I do that when you – when dignitaries of a stature that we had this morning come to a convention, they often cause rather a disruption.

And a lot of the juggling that had to go on at the last second was not the cause of our staff, nor any of the officers here on the podium, but by changes that had to be made because of weather conditions and the landing problems that the lady had with her plane.

So we tried to adjust and make that as quickly as possible. And we did not want to inconvenience you or make you feel uncomfortable. But I hope you understand that. And I appreciate -- I appreciate your concern, and I also appreciate your patience.

*INTRODUCTION OF SECRETARY GENERAL LU CHAI-KAI,
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'd like to introduce someone that we had to move back from this morning to this afternoon and they have to leave to head back. I just recently returned from a trip to Taiwan, Taipei, in Korea. And in that privileged opportunity, I had to meet with the Veterans Affairs Council for the Republic of China. So it's my privilege to introduce to you Lu Chai-Kai, Secretary General of the Veterans Affairs Council for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

Mr. Lu served in the Executive Branch of the country's government for 18 years before moving over to the Veterans Affairs Council in 2003, first as a legal counselor, and since 2013 as Secretary General.

The Veterans Affairs Council is similar to our Department of Veterans Affairs, and they are a gracious host when I visited.

The VFW has a special relationship with the Veterans Affairs Council that goes back many years. Plus we have a strong, longstanding VFW national resolution that supports the Republic of China on Taiwan.

I'm very pleased that he could join us in Charlotte this year, and I do hope that his country quickly recovers from the devastating super typhoon that struck Taiwan earlier this month.

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and sisters, please welcome Secretary General Lu of the Veterans Affairs Council of Taipei -- from Taipei, Taiwan.

(Applause)

*REMARKS BY SECRETARY GENERAL LU CHAI-KAI, VETERANS
AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA*

SECRETARY GENERAL LU: Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. It's a great pleasure and even more an honor for me to be invited here to speak to you. On behalf of the Veterans Affairs Council, Republic of China, I would like to express my utmost compliment for your dedication to your veterans.

The Veterans Affairs Council of Republic of China and the -- the VFW have built a brotherhood relationship since 1980. The reason that we established this long-lasting friendship is that we all share the same values and the beliefs of freedom, democracy, human rights, peace, and international justice.

Furthermore, we all are committed to strive for the respect, benefits or compensations, and the commemorations for soldiers, including their dependents, due to their contribution of their prime time of life or sacrificed their life to fight for those values and to defend their nation.

Taiwan and the US have profound relations in terms of political, economic, trade, and the military security. In other words, Taiwan's development is closely associated with the US interests in the Asia-Pacific region; hence helping Taiwan to continue combating military transformation to gain appropriate self-defense capability to join the economic and the trade pact, such as Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the other related international organizations are extremely crucial for our common interests.

Taiwan is situated in the center of the first island chain in your Western Pacific defense line. Its strategic value is irreplaceable. In return, under those consolidated bases, Taiwan can better involve in enhancing the regional security, peace, and economic development of Asia-Pacific.

In recent years, Taiwan consistently and actively plays the role of Humanitarian Assistance and the Disaster Relief in order to fulfill the responsibility and obligation as one of the members in the international community.

For example, on April 1st of 2015, two F-18C Hornets from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323, based at Kadena Airfield in Japan, suffered mechanic issue during the mission. They successful made a precautionary landing at an airfield in Taiwan under the escort and the guidance of ROC Air Force jets.

This incident not only consolidated our military relations as an ally, but magnified the strategic value of Taiwan on US Rebalancing to Asia-Pacific Policy.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to VFW for your persistent support through submitting the resolution to your Congress and the State Department and supporting Taiwan in terms of defense and arms procurement, foreign and political affairs, economic and trade issues. We will not forget this brotherliness.

Thank you very much, and wish you a successful meeting.

(Applause)

SECRETARY GENERAL LU: Now, on behalf of Republic of China President Tsai Ing-wen, I would like to present Commander-in-Chief the Order of Resplendent Banner with Cravat in recognizing his dedication to promote the friendship between the two countries.

Colonel Wang, please announce the citation. Thank you.

COLONEL WANG: Certificate of Award to accompany the Award of the Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat to Mr. John A. Biedrzycki, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in recognition of his significant contribution to the promotion of friendship and military cooperation between the Republic of China and the United States of America.

The Order of the Resplendent Banner with Cravat is hereby awarded on the date of the 25th of July in the year of 2016.

(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF COMRADE SCOTT STUMP NATIONAL DESERT STORM VETERANS WAR MEMORIAL

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, countless times throughout history, America has defended nations against oppressive attacks. The brave men and women sitting in this room today understand what it takes to defend freedom and democracy.

A commitment that was called upon from afar a quarter of a century ago, after Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in 1990, over half a million of America's finest bravely fought to expel one of the largest military forces in the world. And in doing so, liberated a nation from extreme violence, occupation, and tyranny.

Once the dust settled, more than 300 brave men and women died as a result of that commitment to freedom and to democracy.

This year, we honor the 25th anniversary of the Desert Storm conflict, and yet no national memorial stands in honor of the servicemen and women who served, and those who paid the ultimate price.

A major facet of our mission, as an organization, is to ensure that those who have gone before us in war are remembered and honored properly. VFW members spoke loud and clear in support of the memorial several years ago as the 25th anniversary crept closer.

Passing the Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm Memorial Resolution allowed the VFW to endorse and to voice our strong support of the National Desert Storm Veterans War Memorial and the mission to build a lasting tribute to the bravery, the achievement, the commitment, and the sacrifice of all Desert Storm veterans.

Last November, in anticipation of the 25th anniversary, we kept our word of support when we presented the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association a check for \$100,000 towards the construction of the memorial, which will reside in the National Mall in Washington, DC.

That donation marked the first payment of the VFW's \$500,000 pledge to help build the memorial, and made the VFW the first major veterans service organization to financially back the project.

Our hope is that the memorial will make sure that the memory, the commitment, and the sacrifice endures for generations to come. And we know this memorial will do just that and much, much more.

Here today to talk about the memorial is the CEO and president of the National Desert Storm Veterans War Memorial Board of Directors and a VFW Life Member, please welcome Comrade Scott Stump.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMRADE SCOTT STUMP

COMRADE SCOTT STUMP: Good afternoon, Chief, Officers, comrades and sisters. It's always a distinct honor and privilege to be able to be here and speak with you today.

Before I get started, I wanted to just ask a big favor. Can a representative, either the State Commander or a representative from Tennessee, Texas, and Pennsylvania, please make your way to the – to the front? I'm going to have you up here in just a moment to recognize you, but I don't want you to have to sprint from the back. So if you could just come up toward the front, that would be great.

And I'm not sure if we're going to be doing the -- a PowerPoint, but I wanted to update you on this project and to remind you that this effort started about six years ago. We're in our sixth year.

Two years ago, we had a bill that was signed into law that authorizes the construction of the memorial. We've had a lot of forward momentum and progress since then, and we are in the middle of the site selection process at this juncture. And we have narrowed it down to two distinct locations.

I'm just a little disappointed because I had some visuals for you. But the two locations are -- one of those is --

Oh, it is? Oh, I see. Okay. Gotcha.

Perfect. Thank you. I'm usually not real good at this.

I'm going to run through these first slides pretty quickly, and then get to the sites so that you-all know what I'm talking about.

There's Stormin' Norman. We all remember him. And just to recap what Mr. Duffy was talking about, we had over 600,000 who deployed in Theater 383 that made the ultimate sacrifice. This is about all of those folks.

This is a caption that talks about our board. We are a 501(c)3 made up entirely of volunteers. There isn't anybody on our staff that gets a dime. So it's all volunteer folks. They're all veterans that are serving this cause.

And this caption here, I want to just draw your attention to. There's a picture here. That was from the National Memorial Day parade in Washington, where we had the largest assembly of Desert Storm veterans in 25 years, 500 of them marched down Constitution Avenue. It was quite a sight.

This is just a little bit more about the -- about the war. I'll go through this. This is the visual that a lot of people have seen. This is the rendering that we have had for quite a while.

And this was something that was -- painstakingly has come about. This is something that we elicited feedback over a prolonged period of time, at least four or five months, from veterans and their families, to come up with the most memorable aspects of Operation Desert Storm. And, of course, the "left hook" military maneuver is the most visual, along with the -- the coalition was also a big part.

Just another vantage point.

And then this shows you the 24-step process. I was educated and learned that in order to do a commemorative work in Washington, DC, there are 24 steps that you have to go to to make that happen.

Can anybody tell me why there are 24 steps? It's so that people don't build memorials. Just kidding. It is very difficult, I will assure you that.

This is Site 1. I just want to draw your attention to this. There is some very symbolic reasons why this is our preferred site. This is actually adjacent -- if everybody is familiar with here the Vietnam Education Center site is going to be, it's adjacent, across 23rd Street from that, right in the shadows of the Lincoln Memorial.

We feel that it's very important that we are in this area because it's walkable, but also because of that connection to Vietnam. And I always like to recognize that fact that we have very many -- a lot of connections to Vietnam.

A lot of people sometimes will say, "Well, you know, Scott, Desert Storm was such a resounding and rapid success because the Iraqis were so bad."

And I'm quick to point out, "Have you ever heard of ISIS?" They were not that bad. We are that good. And we were that good because our leaders were all Vietnam veterans. They were not going to let what happened the first time happen to us. And I really give them all of the credit for that.

(Applause)

COMRADE SCOTT STUMP: We also feel very strongly that as our design chair always says, "Where else does a war memorial belong, other than among other war memorials?"

And we think that that tells that story. And with the Vietnam connection, as I said, our leaders, many of them -- most of them were Vietnam veterans. It was also a turning point in our country's history.

And I'm absolutely convinced that if it were not through Operation Desert Storm, I don't think our men and women -- many of you in the audience who have been servicing since 2001 -- I don't think that you would be treated with the level of dignity and respect if we didn't heal those wounds and our country realized what a mistake it was to have treated many of our Vietnam veterans the way that they were.

And I hope that none of you in this room had to endure that. I can't even imagine. But Desert Storm definitely was a point of healing.

So this is our Site 1.

Site 2 is on the other side on the Arlington side -- and don't get me wrong, folks, Arlington is a wonderful place, beautiful. But we -- we just feel that it does belong with those other war memorials and that the walkability factor is very, very important.

But this is Site No. 2, the backup site, either -- on either side of the Memorial Circle, if you-all are familiar with that.

And, lastly, what the current estimate at this point is -- and, of course, we'll know more once we have the actual site narrowed down, which we hope to by the end of the year, is around \$25 million. That's all of the costs included, not just the hard construction costs. And as mentioned, it is all through 100 percent private funding.

And I want to leave our contact information up here for any of those that you want to reach us, we are available on all the social media, Facebook, Twitter. Also have a Web site where folks can donate or contact us directly through the website at www.ndswm.org.

And I wanted to take a moment real quickly, Marlene, if you don't mind. I want to recognize some folks that have been very, very staunch supporters of ours. And one thing that Secretary Clinton said that I will absolutely agree with is if it was not for the VFW, many of our -- really all of our memorials, they would not be in Washington right now.

And I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt I know this, we all know this, and we're very grateful. The Desert Storm Memorial would not happen and nor would it be in Washington, DC, if it were not for the VFW.

So I want to -- first and foremost, want to recognize somebody from the Department of Pennsylvania, please.

Department of Pennsylvania donated \$1,500 at their state convention a few weeks ago. Thank you so much for your -- for your generosity.

(Applause)

COMRADE SCOTT STUMP: Texas. Texas donated 5,000 to the Desert Storm Memorial.

(Applause)

COMRADE SCOTT STUMP: And Tennessee. Tennessee donated \$8,000 to the National Desert Storm War Memorial.

And last but not least, I want to recognize the VFW national organization. For without your help, I would not be here and we would not be talking about a memorial at all. And I want to, with all humbleness and sincerity, thank you for this half-a-million-dollar pledge of which we've received the first \$100,000 installment.

(Applause)

COMRADE SCOTT STUMP: In closing, I just want to reach out to you and I want to just tell you that I'm very proud to say that I've been a member of the VFW family for the last 24 consecutive years. And when you get in a bind and when you need help, who's the first that you turn to? You have to turn to your family. Right?

I want to directly appeal to those 50 departments that have not joined us as of yet, and I want to ask you to consider helping us. We have a pretty stout financial hill that we need to climb in the next 60 days. We've got to raise about -- between \$800,000 and \$1 million for the site selection and engineering process that we're going through.

This is a very serious time in our juncture. We need your help now. And I just want you to seriously consider being a part of this and joining with us.

And as you consider that, I just want -- want you to just think back to those folks that deployed back 25 years ago, almost 26 years ago. And I want you to ask yourself two things: Those 600,000 plus that served, that were willing to serve, is that service and sacrifice any less important than any sacrifice or service that was before them or after them?

And the second thing is: What about these 383 folks that never got to live a full life, that made that ultimate sacrifice, that supreme and ultimate sacrifice? Are their lives any less important, precious, or worthy of commemoration than anyone that came before or came after them?

And if the answer to those questions you come up with is yes, then I'd like to invite you to work with us now. This is the time. This is the place. I'm asking you with all sincerity to please help us get this done and cross the finish line.

Thank you so much everyone. God bless you. God bless the VFW.
(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Thank you, Scott.

*PRESENTATION OF "49 CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP
GROWTH" CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, one thing we have come to realize is that we can count one thing that consistently remains the same at convention: The Department of Arizona increasing their VFW membership.

For a truly remarkable 49 years, the members of the Department Arizona have come together as a team, year in, year out, to consecutively increase VFW membership throughout their state.

What this department has accomplished is truly amazing. On behalf of Commander John Biedrzycki, I commend each and every member of the Department of Arizona for their years of devotion, their tireless efforts that have gone into reaching this momentous achievement.

Now, in honor of their hard work and dedication, I would like to call upon Comrade Roger Gowen from the Department of Arizona to accept his Consecutive Years of Membership Growth Citation. Congratulations to all. And on behalf, again, of Commander Biedrzycki, job well done.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Certificate of Commendation awarded to the Department of Arizona in recognition of a remarkable achievement of 49 consecutive years of membership sustained by the Department of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 25th day of July, 2016. Signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Absolutely. Give him another hand. He just told me that No. 50 is already in the works.

*PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION
TO THE 116TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: It is now my pleasure, again on behalf of Commander Biedrzycki, to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 116th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's very successful national convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the committee is National Council Member Bob Eiler, who also served as the convention committee chairman for that 116th National Convention.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Certificate of appreciation presented to 116th National Convention Committee in extraordinary appreciation and esteemed recognition of its outstanding dedication and persistent drive to ensure the success of the 116th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 18th through the 22nd, 2015.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 25th day of July,

2016. Signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

RESPONSE FROM BOB EILER

COMRADE BOB EILER: Afternoon, Comrades. When I accepted this challenge, I had no doubt in my mind that we would succeed because of the members of the Department of Pennsylvania. Thank you for stepping up, from the Commander on down.

And the Ladies Auxiliary, as it existed last year. Last year it was the Ladies Auxiliary. I thank them from the bottom of my heart, everybody from Pennsylvania. You're a blessing. This will be displayed in department headquarters. Thank you.

(Applause)

*PRESENTATION OF THE FRED C. HALL MEMORIAL OUTSTANDING POST SPECIAL
PROJECT AWARD TO ANGELES CITY, PHILIPPINE,
DEPARTMENT OF PACIFIC AREAS, POST 2485*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, the VFW has a rich tradition of community service, as evidenced by our members' nearly 9 million hours of volunteerism each and every year.

Those hours are spent in a variety of ways, covering everything from visiting the veterans in nursing homes and hospitals, service members, and their families at the local VA facilities to maintaining veteran memorials and teaching classrooms of children proper flag etiquette.

Community service is indeed a founding VFW tenant benefiting education, the environment, health sciences, civic projects, and the military.

Today we honor the Angeles City, Philippines, Department of Pacific Areas, VFW Post 2485 for the years of hard work and tireless dedication to ensuring that the loss of a family member, a traumatic time for all families, is lessened, and that support and assistance are made available to survivors.

More than 20 years ago VFW Post 2485 started managing and maintaining the over 20-acre Clark Veterans Cemetery at the former Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

In more recent years additional services have been added to the post's responsibility, prompting it to create its Burial Assistance Program project.

Through this project, Post 2485 is available to provide invaluable assistance in the form of document preparation, graveside services, and limit delays and undue complications at a critical time.

Further, by teaming up with local funeral service providers, VFW Post 2485 has begun hosting burial assistance seminars to the community and other

local organizations, enabling veterans and their families to make more informed choices.

Post 2485's dedication to serving veterans doesn't end with US veterans. The embassies of Australia and the United Kingdom have also called on it to assist the relocation of remains of their nation's service members for burials in-country.

It is services like this that exemplify why no one does more for veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

So please join me in presenting the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Award to Angeles City, Philippines, VFW Post 2485. Accepting the award on behalf of the post is John Gilbert. John?

(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF BRANDON LEACH

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: As you know, later this afternoon we'll be voting on important Resolution No. 307, which calls for our support of a petition to designate an appropriate portion of the Normandy D-Day invasion beaches as a site of remembrance and reflection; a site to serve as a tribute to the nearly 2500 Americans who paid the ultimate sacrifice in order to begin the liberation of France and the rest of Europe, preserving freedom in the world.

We have a very important guest here with us today to speak on this issue. Brandon Leach may appear like an ordinary 13-year-old boy to most, but I can tell you he has an extraordinary love for this country and the true heart of a patriot.

With a bursting passion for history, he's dedicated himself to supporting our service members and veterans while reminding the American people of all those fighting and sacrificing for our freedom, ensuring those who have served are never forgotten.

Comrades, please give a warm VFW welcome to a patriot, Brandon Leach.

Brandon?

(Applause)

MISTER BRANDON LEACH: Thank you, Chief.

Good afternoon. It is a great honor to be here. Before I begin talking about my petition, I would like to thank everyone here for your service. I also want to thank the VFW for inviting me to speak and for considering this resolution. And I want to thank Senator Bob Dole for his invaluable guidance and support.

The resolution being considered today would support my petition to set aside a small portion of the D-Day beaches to be a historic site reserved for remembrance and reflection. Because currently all of the invasion beaches are public.

The resolution -- ever since I was little, I had a great interest in the military, and I love meeting servicemen and women.

My interest in this D-Day project began years ago when my mom told me about her trip to the Normandy beaches when she was a child with her family, and how all of the invasion beaches were public with people swimming and building sandcastles.

I always thought that was extremely disrespectful to the thousands of soldiers who died there. It always bothered me and sparked me to look into it further. I called the French Embassy, and they confirmed that the beaches are still public. I felt like I had to change that.

I began the petition drive two years ago, which asked the prime minister of France and the president of the United States to work together to establish this historic site. I plan to present the petition to the French and US governments next June on the anniversary of the D-Day landings.

As noted, the petition seeks to set aside a small portion of the beaches as a site for remembrance and reflection, where swimming and sandcastle building are strictly prohibited.

At this site, one would remember the sacrifices made on these beaches and why they are sacred ground. The memories of these sacrifices seem to grow dimmer with each passing year. This site will serve as a tribute to the men who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to begin the liberation of France and the rest of Europe and to preserve freedom in the world.

In addition to remembering those who came ashore and the sacrifices they made, this site will provide a space for reflection; a reflection on the need to stand up to evil and showing that "never again" are not just two words but a reality.

Thank you very much for taking the time to listen and for considering this effort.

Before I end, I would like to show you a video I've made to support my project.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video was shown at this time.)

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: What about that, huh?

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Eighth grade and he's already very interested in competing in some of our scholarship programs for a student. I think he may have a leg up on that.

(Applause)

REPORT ON CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: I'll now request that Betty Gripp give us the initial credentials report.

Betty?

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP: Good afternoon. Commander-in-Chief, Council members, and delegates, the opening credential report for the 117th National Convention at the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 24th, 2016: Total delegates registering their credentials are 11,268; total department commanders, 48; total Past Commander-in-Chiefs, 23; total national officers, 61; for a grand total of 11,400.

Total registered for the 117th National Convention was 1,894. That's my report, sir.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Chief, the show is yours again, sir.

REPORT ON CONVENTION RULES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'd like to call Jack Carney, Chairman of the Convention Rules Committee, forward.

COMRADE JACK CARNEY: Commander-in-Chief, Jack Carney, delegate, Past Commander-in-Chief from Florida. I'd like to tell you that our committee met yesterday in accordance with the recommendations of the Commander-in-Chief.

I'd like to thank Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer of Illinois for being with me and also Dave Prohaska and the other staff members that assisted.

I'd like to tell you that the last couple of days that I have talked with Past Commander-in-Chief Cliff Olson. Cliff was a member of this committee, as appointed by the Commander-in-Chief.

Due to medical problems, Cliff could not come. But I made sure that I touched base with him to make sure that he concurred with the recommendations that I'm going to present to you now.

1. That in accordance and conjunction with the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure, and with any exception noted here, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as the parliamentary authority for this convention.

2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the convention, the delegate shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized shall state their name, post number, and department before they proceed.

3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject in any pending resolution for a period not to exceed five minutes, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the convention present,

provided that the chairmen of the Convention Committee may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their committees.

In the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the motion, or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution, an opportunity for five minutes of rebuttal.

4. All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the department commander; or if he's absent, the department adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to the committee no later than 4:30 p.m., July 26th, 2016, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

5. All resolutions offered on the floor at the convention will initially be in writing and shall automatically, and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper committee.

6. Committee chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions may be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively.

After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate -- debate and convention action.

7. This convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed, or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. No resolution will be considered on the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds.

8. The convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by other veterans organizations or requesting us to join with other organizations in sponsoring legislation not expressively proposed by members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

9. No person, not a duly registered delegate or a member of the national convention shall participate in debate directly or indirectly on any subject before this convention.

10. Unit rule of voting is not allowed.

11. Voting strength shall be determined by those delegates registered as of the close of the credential registration booth the previous day and as reported to the national convention. The department commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each business session, a list of posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those posts listed on the report will be afforded voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the department commander of each delegation shall poll their delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of their delegation.

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed or adjourned, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.

15. When the report of the department commander of a delegation is not accepted to all registered delegates of that delegation and a poll of the department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates without discussion or question.

16. In accordance with Section 621 of the National Bylaws, voting shall be by acclamation, except a roll call may be demanded by ten registered delegates representing posts in ten separate states or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for national officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to four minutes total. Nomination and election of national officers will be held in accordance with the Congressional Charter, Bylaws, and Section 617 of the National Manual of Procedure.

18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create a disturbance which interferes with the orderly procedure of the convention.

19. The Commander-in-Chief may, as may be necessary and appropriate to informing the membership of the activities of this convention, authorize that all or parts of the convention be streamed through the Web site of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

20. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of the convention.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that these rules be adopted for the 117th National Convention.

COMRADE GEORGE CRAMER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, George Cramer, Vice Chairman of the Committee, delegate, VFW Post 3873, Naperville, Illinois, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much, Comrade Past Commanders-in-Chief, for that motion. A motion has been duly made to adopt the rules of the 116th -- 117th Convention and they have been seconded.

Question on the motion? Question being called for? All those in favor use the sign of "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No." Be it so ordered.

*REPORT ON COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BYLAWS,
MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: At this time, I call forward for the Report of the Committee on National Bylaws, Manual Procedure, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. My name is John Gwizdak. I'm a delegate from Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia, and Past Commander-in-Chief. The Bylaw Committee met yesterday, and they discussed all of the resolutions that was presented to the committee.

And I want to thank also vice chairman of the committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers. We also had present with us that afternoon Larry Maher. We had present with us Benny Bachand, the Bylaws Committee Chairman. We had David Prohaska, Zack, and Jonathan who assisted us.

And again, as was mentioned in the bylaws how this convention will be ruled, I will read, first of all, the bylaws that have been recommended to the convention floor by the committee for adoption.

I will read the bylaws at this time recommended by the committee for adoption: Bylaw 2, Bravo 4, Bravo 9, Bravo 11.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that these bylaws be approved by the convention floor.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, delegate, 4287, Orlando, Florida, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You've heard the recommendations of the committee as to resolution being adopted by our convention.

Are there any set-asides?

Commander-in-Chief recognizes microphone No. 1 -- or 3. I'm sorry. 3.

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Microphone No. 3, Commander-in-Chief, Claude Victor Smith, Department of Illinois, delegate from Post 1239, Bridgeton, Illinois, recommends B11 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: D11 set --

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: B. B11.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: B as in --

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Bravo.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Fine.

Are there any other set-asides?

Microphone No. 1?

COMRADE DENNIS BROGAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Speak into the microphone so we can hear you.

COMRADE DENNIS BROGAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Denis Brogan, VFW Post 2550, Department of Florida. I motion to set aside M2, "Solicitation of Funds."

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's out of order. We're not on M yet. We are not on the Manual. Just B2, 4, 9, and 11.

Any other set-asides? Any other set-asides?

All right. We're going to go and vote on those. The adoptions of the ones that aren't set aside, 2, 4, and 9. B2, 4, and 9.

Question on the motion?

All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All those opposed, "No."

It's so ordered.

All right. Let's take the set-aside. B11, do you have any discussion?

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Commander-in-Chief, yes, we do have some discussion.

In Illinois we have a good, strong assembly of our men's veterans -- men's auxiliaries. For example, in my post, our auxiliary, in the last three years, built an outstanding veterans memorial with very little help from the post. They did it on their own. Now --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's nice.

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: -- B10 was put in in order to extend the death of the auxiliaries. But there was a mistake when it was written. Instead of having the date of January -- it would extend it one year, but it was in error when it was printed up.

Therefore, we would like to set B11 aside and not kill the auxiliary this year and come back next year with the date for the death of the auxiliaries.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrade, we need to get this straight. First of all, you may have selected -- you want to not vote the resolution so that you can change the date for the coming year?

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I see. That's not an option yet. We're not on that yet. That was B10. You said B11. You're talking about the men's auxiliary.

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Yeah, but B10 is on the rejection list, and we're not going to ask for it to do anything. It's dead. But that had the drop-dead date one year later than this year, which would allow the auxiliaries to function one more year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Oh, in other words, you want to change it to allow them to function one more year under B11?

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: No, we can't change the bylaw. But by not voting it, it doesn't have a drop-dead date.

OMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You can -- you know, if it's defeated, you can come back next year. I'd like Chairman Gwizdak to speak to it.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade, we fought for many years to change because it was not supposed to be any comparisons to many auxiliaries. We now have one auxiliary. And based on the action of the 116th National Convention, this action is to keep consistent with the Resolution No. 302 at the 115th National Convention to eliminate gender bias.

We believe the action is necessary to provide equality for all veterans with the growth of our auxiliary. We went to the auxiliary and said, "We're going to change to make one." And now we're going to stand here again and say, "No, no, no, we want to be specifically different and have it to go on forever."

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Not forever. We would come back next year with a drop-dead date at the end of the year.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: You know, why did we vote then to change to one?

OMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Because we can't -- we've been informed we cannot change B10, the way it's written.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Are there any other speakers to this issue?

COMRADE RUSS RIEKE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, my name is Russ Rieke. I'm from Post 5694. And I'm a delegate to this National Convention.

You know, for many years we had our sons of the VFW. And once they became 18, they were actually kicked out. So we came back and started the men's auxiliary hoping that it would be here forever. Last year, we spoke on the same issue, and we were told it's a done deal. And now you're telling us it's still a done deal.

If the states who have men's auxiliaries, if they want them, please, for God sakes, let them keep them. That means so much to us and to our smaller posts, if they -- if we lose our men's auxiliary to some of them smaller posts, they're not going to stand a chance.

And where do we come from? We come from membership. And these young people in the men's auxiliary are helping us keep above the water instead of drowning. Please do not take that away from us. If you take that away from us -- especially in the Department of Illinois -- they gain us membership and they gain us popularity and they gain us in our -- in our budgets.

And so I ask that we keep the men's auxiliary as it is today.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Any more speakers? Any other speakers to speak to this?

COMRADE JUDITH BERGER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Judith Berger, Post 4108, delegate, Department of Oregon.

Comrades, we have talked about this time and again. This is the third time you've heard me talk on this particular issue, or at least around the auxiliary. This is a sound, sound bylaw change. It will not change popularity.

It will not change our ability or our auxiliary's ability to have membership, activity, popularity, or a chance to grow. What it will do is continue to add to the equality we've started to represent our families.

My dad is a senior vice in my auxiliary at my post. My nephews -- because my sister is also a combat vet -- are officers in my auxiliary. I can tell you from experience that my auxiliary has multiplied by almost a third because we now have men in this auxiliary.

It will not damage. If they are legitimately authorized to be an auxiliary member, then welcome them to the auxiliary. Let them do the work with everybody else, with the women, with our wives, our mothers and daughters, the same as they have always done as it should be.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Please address the Chair. I'm going to wait -- I'm going to switch microphones. I'll be right back. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BOB COX: Comrade commander, Bob Cox, 2715, Kansas. On this issue of the men's auxiliary, we must all remember that we asked the former Ladies Auxiliary to give up their name after 100 years of tradition. We need to give a little to help out. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Back to Microphone No. 3, next speaker.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Mike Musgrove, delegate, Post 2350, Elko, Nevada.

The men's auxiliary, when it was created, had a specific set of eligibility rules. Those eligibility rules are the same as they are for our auxiliary. There's no reason why any of these men's auxiliaries can't just transition into our auxiliaries and our posts and do the same work they've been doing all along.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Any other speakers to this issue? Any other speakers to this resolution?

All right. Now, since this is the first time we're doing this, I'm going to have our judge advocate, "Fritz" Mihelcic, explain what happens when you have a set-aside and the motion that has been made.

Fritz?

COMRADE CLAUDE VICTOR SMITH: Thank you, sir.

The motion has been made for B11. It has been seconded. It is on the floor. We have had debate. The set-aside just made this not be part of the blanket approval that we previously did.

Right now, we will take a vote solely on B11. It will take a two-thirds majority vote to pass this bylaw amendment. If you are in favor of B11, you will

vote "aye," or in the affirmative. If you do not wish B11 to pass, you must vote in the negative.

Sir?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Nothing like going to school here from the podium.

Now, I'm going to consider this motion. The question being called for for a vote. Are there any questions on the motion?

All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The decision not in doubt. Aye has the vote and the motion is defeated.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Yeah, it'll stand.

B11 passed. I'm sorry. B11 passes.

All right. Continue.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Thank you, Chief.

The bylaws that were rejected, B1, B3, B5, B6, B7, B8, and B10.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those resolutions are suggested by the committee for rejection. And for any adoption, you're going to have to get up and make a motion to adopt.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BOB COX: Comrade Commander, Bob Cox, 2715, state of Kansas. I would make a -- entertain a -- I would motion that these seven be set aside --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: There is no motion to set aside.

COMRADE BOB COX: -- to correct -- to adopt it or not adopt it. Is that correct?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Pardon?

COMRADE BOB COX: To adopt it or not adopt it? Is that -- okay.

I need to make a motion --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Yes, nothing has happened on these. If you want it, you have to make a motion to accept that --

COMRADE BOB COX: Okay. Thank you, Commander. I will make a motion that we accept B7 and B8.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: B7 and B8. A motion to accept B7 and B8.

All right. Is there any discussion? I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE FLETCHER: Comrade Commander, Fletcher, Post 7253, Kansas. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's fine. There's a motion made and seconded to adopt these two bylaw changes. One at a time. The first one is 7.

Are there any discussion on 7? Any discussion on 7? All right. Question being called for. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Motion defeated.

All right. The other one is 9 -- 8. 8. I'm sorry.

Any question on the motion for Resolution No. 8? Question being called for. Let's take a vote, all those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Motion defeated. Thank you.

Let's move on.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Thank you, Comrade Commander.

Now, we'll move to the Manual Procedure recommended for adoption by the committee. M1, M2, M6, M7, M9, M11, M13, M14, M15, M16.

Comrade Commander, I move that these Manual Procedures changes be accepted on the floor.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, delegate, 4287, Orlando, Florida, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: A motion has been duly made and seconded to adopt those resolutions. Are there any set-asides?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DENIS BROGAN: All right. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Denis Brogan, VFW Post 2550, the Department of Florida. I make a motion that we set aside M2.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You don't need a motion. It's a request. M2.

Are there any other set-asides? Are there any other set-asides?

We're going to take a vote on all the others. Question being called for. All those in favor signify by the use of the sign of "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

Be it so ordered.

All right. Let's go on with your issue -- discussion.

COMRADE DENIS BROGAN: All right. Comrade Commander, when we look at the reading, the wording of this, there was two things that were brought up.

One is you were trying to find a way to regulate the solicitation of funds on the Internet. By doing this, part of it says "is not repetitive or ongoing," and then you were talking about geographic territory.

When you look at geographic territory physically, all right, if someone comes from Michigan and visits my post and wants to donate to something that

I've got listed as a fund, that they're visiting. All right? So that doesn't affect what's going on somewhere else in Michigan. He felt like donating.

When you look at the Internet, you're not looking at Facebook, and whatnot, as that. But that's actually what it is. When I make a Facebook page, that's my page. That's my electronic geographical area. You actually have to come to my page and like it.

So there's nothing wrong with someone coming to my page and liking it, and then seeing that I'm raising money on an ongoing basis. Because I personally have three different scholarships at my post.

If you -- if we do this, it says right here we can use the Internet for communications provided that the activity is not repetitive or ongoing. Everything we do is repetitive. We're always trying to raise money for Voice of Democracy so we can give them and award them more money, pay for the dinner. So it starts all over. It's repetitive.

So when I have my own Web base -- we have an Internet page, we have Facebook -- I have links on there for PayPal. So if you want to donate to our Landing Vehicle Tracked Fund to keep the maintenance on it, you can. You have that choice. You're opting in, opting out. And it's not affecting any other post anywhere else.

They're coming -- they're visiting my page. It's no different than them coming from Michigan and visiting my post.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. Is there any other discussion? Any other discussion on this resolution?

We're just going to call for the vote, and it'll require two-thirds to be accepted.

Question on the motion? All those in favor use the sign of "Aye."
(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No."
(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Motion defeated.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Yeah, Manual Procedure that the committee has recommended for rejection is M3, M4, M5, M8, M10, M12, M17.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those are the resolutions that were rejected. Anybody who wants those considered needs to make a motion to adopt.

Seeing none -- seeing no one at the microphones, those resolutions die for lack of discussion, and the committee's decision stands.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander, the next to be considered is the Ritual recommended for adoption. The committee recommends for adoption R1, R2, and R5. And I so move that these be adopted by the floor.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, delegate, 4287, second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. Motion has been made to adopt these resolutions.

Are there any set-asides? Seeing the microphones, are there any set-asides?

Not seeing any, we're going to take a vote. All those in favor say "Aye."
(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No."

Be it so ordered. Those resolutions are adopted.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander, the committee recommends for rejection from the Ritual R3 and R4.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: R3 and R4. Anybody want to make a motion to adopt? Seeing no one at the microphones, they die and the committee's decision stands.

The Chief recognizes Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAVID PROHASKA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, David Prohaska, delegate, Post 4434, Michigan. I make a motion to reconsider M2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Benny Bachand, delegate, 4287, Orlando, Florida, seconds that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. There has been a motion and second to reconsider M2.

Okay. We only need a majority vote to accept this. Question being called for. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: There is no reconsideration. The Chair rules in the negative.

COMRADE JOHN GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander and delegates, that concludes the report of the Bylaws Committee and I thank the Bylaws Committee for all their efforts in the study of all this.

Comrade Commander, that's it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Gwizdak, and the entire committee for your diligence.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I would now like to continue Finance and Internal Organization Committee resolutions. Past Commander-in-Chief Banas?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good afternoon, Comrades. My name is Edward Banas, a member of VFW Post 10004, the Department of Connecticut, and a Past Commander-in-Chief, and the chairman of this committee, along with Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller.

We had three resolutions: Resolution 201, 202, and 203. And I report to the body that none of them left committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. Those resolutions have been rejected by the committee. And if anybody wants to discuss one of those, you have to come to the microphone and make a motion.

Microphone No. 1, do you have somebody? No.

Not seeing anyone at the microphones, the decision of the committee stands in the negative, and those are rejected.

All right. At this time, I want to thank the committee for their hard work and efforts, and I discharge the committee at this time.

REPORT ON COMMITTEE OF GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We'll now hear the Committee on General Resolutions, Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Comrades, George Lisicki, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, VFW Post 2314, New Jersey.

Our committee met yesterday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. on General Resolutions. Along with me was Past Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien and our National Staff Member, Bob Crider.

The following resolution was approved: Resolution 302 was put up for approval. I so move for adoption of Resolution 302.

COMRADE BILL VINE: Bill Vine, Post -- delegate, Post 3281, New Albany, Indiana. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. All we have to do is take a vote on this. A simple majority to pass Resolution 302.

Question being called for. All those in favor say "Aye."
(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No."

The resolution passes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the following resolutions were recommended for disapproval: Resolution 301, 303, 304, 305, 306, and 307.

Comrades, Resolution 307 was added at our committee meeting, and I'll read the -- that resolution to you. "Resolution in support of petition to set aside a portion of the Normandy D-Day invasion beaches as a site for remembrance and reflection." I read that be it resolved.

By the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we express our support for Brandon Leach's petition to set aside a small portion of Normandy D-day invasion beaches as a historic site; a site of remembrance and reflection; where swimming and sandcastle building are strictly prohibited. It will serve as a tribute to the men who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to

begin the liberation of France and the rest of Europe and to preserve freedom in the world.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: If anybody wishes to consider these resolutions, you have to make a separate motion. They've been suggested rejection by the committee.

Not seeing anyone at the microphones, I'll call for the vote.

There is no vote, I'm sorry. The committee -- the committee's decision to reject will stand. Well, that's it. Thank you very much, committee. And at this time, this committee stays in session -- stays up in case there are other General Resolutions that are submitted during the convention.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, now we'll call for the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Allen "Gunner" Kent.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KENT: Good afternoon, Comrades. My name is Gunner Kent. I'm a delegate, Past Commander-in-Chief, and also a delegate of Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Commander-in-Chief, I'd like to thank you very much for this appointment. It is my pleasure to report that the Convention Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs convened at the Charlotte Convention Center at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, July 24th, 2016.

Your instructions were read, roll call was conducted, and action was taken on the resolutions referred to this committee. We, once again, held a meeting in conjunction with the POW/MIA Subcommittee because -- because the information presented and the resolutions that were passed were all -- important to all committee members.

For their support, wisdom, and guidance, I would like to thank the Vice Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee; Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud from Nevada; the Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer from Massachusetts; the Vice Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy "T" Tradewell from Wisconsin.

And a special thanks to our Committee Advisers: Joe Jackson -- Joe Davis and Bob Jackson from the Washington office, and all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberation and active participation.

The committee had three guest speakers. The first was Lu Chai-Kai, the Secretary General of the Veterans Affairs Council for the Republic of China on Taiwan; Mr. Lawrence Romo, the Director of the Selective Service System; and Mr. Johnny Webb from the Operational Arms of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and a Life Member of VFW Post 352 in Hawaii.

I will now move forward with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee recommendation. If any delegate would like a resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed the approval segment of the report and move for adoption.

I will now read the resolution numbers that the committee recommends for approval as submitted. All resolutions were recommended for approval. Resolution 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421.

Before I ask for a recommendation to approve, does anybody want a set-aside?

I now move for the adoption of Resolutions 401 through 421 as submitted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Stroud, delegate, Post 2313, Department of Nevada.

Past Commander-in-Chief and Vice Chairman of the committee, I second the motion for the adoption of Resolutions 401 through 421 as submitted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'm going to ask are there any set-asides for any of those motions that were approved by the committee? Anyone with discussion?

Hearing none, we're going to take a vote, and that should be in the affirmative. Question being called for. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

The Resolutions 401 through 421 passed.

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'll now call the Subcommittee up. Past Commander-in-Chief Richard DeNoyer?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DENOYER: Good afternoon, Comrades. My name is Richard DeNoyer, Chairman of the Subcommittee on POW/MIA, Post 1012, Medford, Massachusetts, Department of Massachusetts.

Commander-in-Chief, I am pleased to report that the POW/MIA Subcommittee met on Sunday, July 24th, 2016, in a combined meeting with the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Your instructions were followed. All members were present or accounted for and action was taken on the resolutions assigned to this committee.

For their support, wisdom, and guidance, I want to thank the Vice Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Tommy "T" Tradewell from Wisconsin; the Chairman of the National Security of Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Gunner Kent from Arizona; the Vice Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud of Nevada; committee advisers: Joe Davis and

Bob Jackson from the Washington office; and all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee and the POW/MIA Subcommittee for their thoughtful deliberation and active participation.

Comrades, I will now read the two resolutions that the subcommittee recommends for approval. If any delegate would like any resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have moved for adoption.

No. 422, "Protect POW/MIA Full Accounting Mission Funding," approve.

423, "Call for more unilateral POW/MIA actions by Vietnam," approve.

I now move that Resolutions 422 and 423 be approved as submitted.

COMRADE TOMMY "T" TRADEWELL: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Tommy "T" Tradewell, delegate from Post 6498, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Vice Chairman of the Committee. I second the motion to adopt these two resolutions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. The motion's been made and duly seconded that we adopt these two resolutions, 421 and 422. Any discussion?

Not hearing any, let's take a vote. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed?

Be it so ordered.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DENOYER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, this now concludes the POW/MIA Subcommittee report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We'll be there in a second.

I now dismiss this committee with my thanks for their professional efforts.

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Brian Duffy, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 1170, Kentucky, make a motion to reconsider 307.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: There's been a motion to reconsider 307.

Kevin? I recognize you.

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Jones, Post delegate 7356, Parkville, Missouri, seconds that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. A motion has been made and seconded to reconsider Resolution 307. It just requires a majority vote to get it back on the floor for further discussion.

Not hearing any speakers or seeing any speakers, we're going to move -- well -- you can debate the reconsideration. Excuse me.

Microphone No. 3. Are you going to debate the reconsideration?

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I am, sir. But we've got to vote first on allowing us to reconsider. Right?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: No. Are you debating the reconsideration or are you --

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: No, no, no. I –

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. You're not going to debate the reconsideration. So this is just an up or a down. Okay. So we need a positive to get it back on the floor.

Calling on the question. All those in favor for reconsideration say "Aye."
(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."
(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The ayes have it. The motion is back on the floor for reconsideration.

Now, we need a motion to adopt.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Brian Duffy, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 1170, Kentucky. I make a motion to adopt 307.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. A motion to adopt 307. Kevin?

COMRADE KEVIN JONES: Commander-in-Chief, Kevin Jones, delegate, Post 7356, Parkville, Missouri, seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. A motion has been made and seconded to reconsider -- or to pass 307. And now we can debate and discuss it. So Microphone 3 is recognized.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Commander-in-Chief, could you please read 307 one more time, please?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You want 307 read again?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Please.

It's at the -- there we go.

COMRADE RICHARD DENOYER: Comrades, I'm going to read Resolution 307 in its entirety, being it wasn't in the book.

Resolution 307. "Resolution in support of petition to set aside a portion of the Normandy D-Day invasion beaches as a site for remembrance and reflection. Whereas, the greatest amphibious assault in the history of warfare began on June 6th, 1944, when the Allied Troops began the invasion of Normandy beaches to liberate German-occupied Europe;

"And whereas, D-Day, code name "Operation Overland," marked the beginning of the end of World War II, which over 150,000 Allied Troops involved in the invasion;

"And whereas, the United States National D-Day Memorial Foundation determined that there were 4,413 Allied facilities on D-Day, including 2,499 Americans;

"And whereas, the monument honoring D-Day is this: All the invasion beaches are public beaches. The very aspect that made these beaches virtually important to the Allied Forces also made them highly desirable for a day at the beach by tourists and resident beachgoers;

"And whereas, the sacrifice made on these beaches made them sacred ground with the memories of the sacrifice growing dimmer with each passing year;

"Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we express our support for Brandon Leach's petition to set aside a small portion of the Normandy D-Day invasion beaches as a historic site, a site of remembrance and reflection; where swimming and sandcastle building are strictly prohibited; where it will serve as a tribute to the men who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to begin the liberation of France and the rest of Europe and to preserve freedom in the world.

"COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. You've heard a resolution reading of 307. Now, for discussion, Microphone 3, you're recognized.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, sir, John Hamilton, delegate, Post 7909, Past Commander-in-Chief, current Adjutant General. I rise in favor, in favor of 307.

Now, what better way -- why should we not ask a -- I understand it's a foreign government. But why should we not ask those folks to set aside a small portion of the land at the beach, one of the most significant, most significant battles in American history?

On that beach, if you've ever stood there in that cemetery and looked down on that beach, it's an awesome, awesome, awesome experience. And I firmly believe why not?

We listened to a young 13-year-old child here today talk about his passion, his passion for setting aside that. I share that same passion. I think we should do that. Why not do that?

You know, there's plenty of beach there, if you've ever been there. Build your sandcastles and stuff over here. But let's set aside something to honor those people who truly liberated France and the rest of Europe and brought this war to an end. I rise in support of 307.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Microphone No. 1 is recognized.

COMRADE WAYNE HOLDER: Commander-in-Chief, Wayne Holder, Post 10810, Department of Europe. I disagree with that. The -- our brave men who've died to liberate Europe has memorials there with all those white crosses and the Star of David.

How are we -- why should we, who liberated a country, saying, "You are free to do what you want," then come back and say, "No, you need to do what we ask you to do. We want you to save that land"?

They have that land. Nobody will ever forget what happened on D-Day because looking at the cemeteries there. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Back to recognizing Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE RON AMEND: Ron Amend, Post delegate for 7486, Michigan. I rise against passing this motion. Because in the committee meeting

we had, we were there, and the understanding we have is we're going to ask a foreign country -- request a foreign country to set aside.

But what more honor can you give the fallen is that -- allow kids to be able to put a sandcastle and swim in that water because they bled over it? I think that is a greater honor and that is a monument right there in itself. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ART SHANNON: Art Shannon, Arkansas, Post 8532. We do not want them to come over here to tell us we've got to put statues in our front yard. So why do we have the right to go over there and take their land away from them after we fought to give it them and that people died willingly to do it? We have no right to do what you're wanting to do, is take land away from them that people fought and died to get and then give it back to them. And we've given it back to them once. We have no right to take it. We don't want them to tell us what we've got to build on our shores.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

Microphone No. 3 recognized.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Brian Duffy, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, delegate, VFW Post 1170, Kentucky. This isn't telling a foreign country what they have to do. This is a request.

The genesis of this young boy coming forward earlier to make his presentation was because of the -- Commander -- or Comrade Bob Dole's also agreement in supporting this.

We're not asking or we're not directing any foreign government to do this. We're making a request. You know, talking about these beaches, we're really talking about a memorial.

We would not allow, nor would we want anybody to go bathing in the World War II Memorial, nor would we want them to play handball against the Vietnam Wall.

This is simply a request of a foreign government to support this setting this aside for what it is: Sacred, hallowed ground.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Recognizing Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE AL JONES: Comrade Commander, Al Jones, VFW Post 21, Pennsylvania, and Chief of Staff. I listened to a young man this morning take a project on on behalf of World War II veterans that served our country on foreign soil.

Being one myself and being there, I had tears in my eyes. When he was finished, I listened to this assembly applaud him on his efforts.

So I would request that as we, delegates to this convention, show to a young American that was willing to take an endeavor on our behalf of those that served during World War II to approve this. Thank you, Comrade Commander.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

Back to Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAVID MOSKE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, David Moske, Post 1064, West Virginia. First of all, this is not a demand. This is supporting a young American and honoring our men and women and the men that fought in World War II.

We are told, as young members, to move forward. But it is important that we do not forget the men and women who have sacrificed so much to give us what we have today. I am firmly in favor for this. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE B. J. ELDRIDGE: Sir, B. J. Eldridge, Colorado, Post 4051 delegate. I stand in favor of this, and I agree with Comrade Duffy and others who've said we are requesting.

As a student of history, as generations go on, people, kids forget. If you have a memorial, it makes it tougher to forget. Some young French kid may say, "What is that, Daddy?"

And he'll say, "That's because Americans came here to liberate us."

You also have to remember the French gave us the Statue of Liberty. They didn't demand it. They just gave it to us.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Back to Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DAN WEST: Dan West, delegate, Post 3413, Texas, past Department Commander.

Comrades, our own congressional charter states that we should perpetuate the memory and the history of our dead. I've walked on those beaches of Normandy and there are no monuments. You walk every other battlefield across this globe, there are monuments to the men who fought and died there; and now soon there will be monuments to the men and women who fought and died there.

There are none on the Normandy beaches. And, yes, we have cemeteries, but every battlefield has a cemetery and they also have a monument.

Let's do our part, uphold our congressional charter and perpetuate a memory in history of our dead, and turn this over to the French government for their action.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

Continue. Do I have another speaker at Microphone No. 3?

SISTER JUDITH BERGER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Judith Berger, Post 4108, delegate from Oregon.

I had a very unique opportunity back in 2004 to accompany my grandfather, who was a World War II veteran, a survivor of the Zittau – Zittau POW camp, captured during the Battle of the Bulge.

It was what I can say one of the most moving experiences of my life. We got the opportunity to travel a lot of locations throughout Europe, a lot of special, special places.

I am not in support of requesting this because there is not a place on the planet where we have shed blood in the rights of defense of freedom that is not hallowed. And I think that we need to remember that when we're setting up those remembrances, when we're asking that, how many places are there remembrances that we are not even acknowledging?

So I am asking that we have a bigger picture here and look at what is being ignored. Where across Europe hasn't? We remembered that those monuments are there because they are everywhere. And the people who were there who experienced it, they remember.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DALE SMITH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Department of California, State Commander, Dale Smith, Post 3783, I call for the question.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Question being called for. I need a second. I need a second and two-thirds -- two-thirds to demand debate.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: John Hamilton, 7909, seconds.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. A motion has been made and seconded to end debate on this question -- this resolution. It takes two-thirds majority to end the debate.

All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

It's so ordered. The debate is ended. Now, you get to vote on the resolution itself. This is a simple vote, up or down, yes for the resolution; and, of course, no against it.

All right. Calling for the question. All those in favor of Motion 307 -- of Resolution 307 vote "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The ayes have it, and the motion is now passed.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, that's what I call following the rules, too. Yes, you're right. And you can get things done.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Report of the Committee of Veterans Service Resolutions, our last committee report. Chairman Gary L. Kurpius, Past Commander-in-Chief.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: Gary Kurpius, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 9365, Wasilla, Alaska. Commander Biedrzycki, I report that your convention committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 24th, 2016.

I also wish to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, who was the Vice Chairman, for his assistance in deliberations.

The committee was divided into three subcommittees to deliberate each of the 32 resolutions that were assigned. The subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee 1 handled the health. It was chaired by Wade Hutchinson from Ohio and Daniel Driscoll from Wisconsin. Staff advisers are James Moss, Assistant Director of Veterans Health Policy NVS; and Carlos Fuentes, Deputy Director National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee 2 handled the benefits and that was chaired by Paul Pierlot from Michigan and Vice Chairman William Hale from Idaho. Staff advisers were Gerry Minard, the Director for National Veteran Service; and Reed Kelly, the Director of National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee 3, Economic and Opportunities and Others, was chaired by Jason Smith from Florida and Vice Chairman Cynthia Archuleta from New Mexico. Staff advisers are Ryan DeLucie, Deputy Director National Veterans Service; and Kenneth Wiseman, Manager of Action Corps, National Legislative Service.

I also wish to thank Don Urich, NVS staff, who served as our committee -- committee secretary and coordinated the results of our deliberations.

I will now proceed with the reading of the resolution numbers that the committee recommends for approval as written: 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 627, 629.

Comrade Commander, I move that these be adopted.

COMRADE JIM NIER: Commander-in-Chief, Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 8919, Texas. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The motion has been made and seconded to adopt these resolutions. Are there any set-asides?

Not seeing anyone at the microphones, we'll take a vote on the acceptance of these resolutions of the committee.

All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

Be it so ordered.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: We have two resolutions that were approved as amended. And these were just basically some grammatical errors, or something like that, and did not change the intent of the resolution at all. These approved as amended is Resolution 608 and 632.

Comrade Commander, I move that we adopt these resolutions.

COMRADE JIM NIER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 8919, Texas. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. There's a motion made and seconded that 608 and 632 be adopted as amended.

Are there any discussion on the motions? Not seeing anyone at the microphones, we'll take a vote. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No."

Be it so ordered. They're accepted.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: Comrade -- I'm sorry, Comrades, I guess my paperwork stuck together here. I started at 611, and we have 601 up to 610 here that we have to also move on. I'll read those numbers because we did have what we just approved, the one that we amended. But Amendment -- or Resolution 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 609, and 610. I also move that we approve these.

COMRADE JIM NIER: Commander-in-Chief, Jim Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 8919. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. There's been a motion made and seconded that we adopt Resolution 601 to 610.

Asking for discussion. Not seeing anyone at the microphones, we'll take a voted. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "No." Be it so ordered, they're adopted. We'll now go with rejections.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: We'll call on Vice Chairman Nier, so he earns his per diem check, to read the resolutions rejected.

COMRADE JIM NIER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll read the resolution numbers that the committee recommends for rejection. They are 626, 628, 630, and 631.

Commander-in-Chief, this concludes the reading of the numbers of the resolutions the committee recommends for rejection. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We have four that were suggested rejected by the committee.

Is there anyone who wants to make a motion to adopt either 626, 28, 30, or 31?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Mike Musgrove, delegate, Post 2350, Elko, Nevada. I move to adopt 626.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: There's been a motion to adopt 626. Do we have a second?

COMRADE EDWARD STURGES: Commander, Edward Sturges, delegate for 3547, Nevada. I want to second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. A motion has been made and seconded to adopt 626. If there's any discussion on the motion.

Comrade?

COMRADE MIKE MUSGROVE: Comrade Commander, Mike Musgrove, delegate, Post 2350, Elko, Nevada.

I, myself, have suffered through diseases and cancer that is presumptive for exposure to herbicides, specifically Agent Orange, and I spent two tours in Thailand. I had a claim. My claim has been rejected numerous times just because I didn't have boots on ground in Vietnam.

Through documentation that has been declassified over the years, the government has finally admitted to spraying Agent Orange as a defoliant around our bases in Thailand. Now they are accepting dog handlers that wandered around the perimeter because that's where they sprayed it predominantly.

I was a weapons mechanic. I was a 462. We were at the end of the runway pulling pins on bombs a stone's throw -- a very small area or distance from the perimeter fence.

Our orderly rooms were at the bomb dumps. The bomb dump was six miles off the base. We were in and out of those gates all the time because we had to go to the bomb dump for various things, administrative things.

We were constantly exposed to the areas where they'd used the defoliants. Through legislative action, we've taken care of the Blue Water sailors. Now, it's time that we take care of the soldiers and the airmen that served on the Royal Thai Air Force bases in Thailand.

Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

I continue to recognize Microphone No. 3.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, Commander-in-Chief --

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Just a minute. Just a moment.

All right. First of all, the title of this resolution has extended the presumption of exposure to herbicides to veterans stationed at Royal Thai military bases during the Vietnam War.

Before I give you -- before you say your remarks, which may be more poignant, I'm going to allow the committee to explain to you why they rejected it, and then we're going to hear from you. Okay?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, sir, I was a co-chair of the subcommittee so I was going to do the same thing.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, 626 was rejected in favor of Commander-in-Chief Resolution 619 "Toxic Exposure," which is a much stronger resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: So having said that, we've got a motion on the floor to discuss it. Are there any other speakers on this resolution? I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE MONTI ZIMMERMAN: Commander-in-Chief, Monti Zimmerman, delegate from Manassas Park Post in Virginia.

I understand the distinction between 619 and 626. But the point of 626, although very localized, is very specific to a small group of people for a certain condition that is not really addressed in the broader sense of 619.

Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Recognize Microphone 3.

COMRADE BILL HEYOB: Sir, Bill Heyob of Post 63, delegate from the Department of Idaho, again a national co-chair on this subcommittee.

Just to go in further detail on 619, if you looked at all the whereases, it breaks it down for not only Thailand service Vietnam veterans, Blue Water Navy veterans, Camp Lejeune contaminated water, burn pit. It covers everything.

So it is a lot more detail. You just can't see that detail with the whereases not in the convention book. That's why we recommended the rejection of 626 in favor of 619.

Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade.

Any other speakers to this?

All right. The motion has been made to adopt this rejected resolution, and it's a simple majority vote. All those in favor would adopt the resolution; all those against it would defeat it. I'm going to take a vote. All those in favor say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All those opposed, "No."

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The motion is defeated.

The other three resolutions that were rejected by the committee will stand rejected.

COMRADE GARY KURPIUS: Comrade Commander, thank you so much for our appointment and that concludes our committee report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

I'd like to thank the committee on Veterans Service Resolutions, and at this time I so dismiss them from their duties. They did a good job. It's very difficult and tedious work to go through that paperwork and make sure that it's correct.

All right. We're about ready to adjourn until tomorrow. But before we do that, I'm going to call on the Adjutant General for any announcements he may have to make.

CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Just quickly the 2013-2014 Past Department Commanders Dinner will be held at Post 9488, 2831, the Plaza, Charlotte, North Carolina. Transportation will be available between 4:30 and 5:00 from the following hotels by van: The Westin, the Marriott, the Hilton Center City, the Omni.

Please be in front of your hotel at 4:30 for pickup if you would like a ride. I've already given you the other two. And remember we start again tomorrow at 0800. Okay.

Chief?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: May I, before I close and ask the Sergeant to close, compliment you on your fine department today as we welcomed the guests and your fine department in conducting business at this convention.

Keep up the good work. We're having a great convention. Enjoy yourselves this evening.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Sergeant-at-Arms?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You will please perform the closing ceremonies for today's Business Session.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir. Comrades, please rise for the closing prayer and a salute to our Colors. Comrade National Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN NICK GUEST: Let us pray.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Uncover.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN NICK GUEST: Dear Lord, we are grateful for this time together. As we go about our business this evening, please watch over us and keep us safe, and we may meet again tomorrow.

We have much more work to accomplish and we ask for Your guidance in completing it. Keep us safe and strong, both physically and spiritually, until we meet again. In Your name we pray. Amen.

(Amen)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the flag of the United States, join me in the salute.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the close of this meeting has been taken care of, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: You're welcome.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you. I never thought you'd be tongue-tied.

We are adjourned until 8:00 o'clock tomorrow morning. Please be prompt.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 3:45 p.m., to reconvene on Tuesday, July 26th, 2016, at 8:00 a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2016

(The Second Business Session of the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, was called to order at 8:02 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: May I have your attention, please. Please take your seats. I'd like to begin.

I will now reconvene the 117th VFW National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please conduct the opening ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

National Sergeants, attention.

Comrades and sisters, please rise for the opening prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Heavenly Father, we ask Your blessings upon us and those assembled here. We have much to accomplish. And, as always, we are asking You to guide us. We know that it is only through Your good graces that we are here to do this work; and that without You, we can accomplish nothing.

With Your help and guidance and with open hearts and minds, we trust that You will help us reach the correct conclusions to anything that might arise.

Watch over us, our officers, and our visitors. Keep us all safe and true to our convictions that we may all do the right things. In Your name we pray. Amen.

(Amen)

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: National Sergeants, attention.

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen, facing the flag of our country, join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance were given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the opening has been completed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Sergeant.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Everyone please be seated.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: National Sergeants, right face.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Before I start, we have a lot of exciting events to take place this morning. I call upon our Adjutant General for some schedule changes.

And I did explain this in yesterday's afternoon session, that when we have such -- when we have invited guests, we were unfortunately forced to do some changing because of airplane problems and so forth. So that happens normally. And in the course of that action, we're going to make some adjustments today. So I hope you'll listen up and pay attention.

Comrade Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

Good morning.

(Morning)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Hey, good morning.

(Morning)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: There we go. Changes to today's schedule, please, to today's luncheon, 2016-2017 Department Commanders, new time is 1:15. That's the luncheon for Department Commanders of 2016-2017, 1:15, in Room 213 ABC. 213 ABC.

The 2016-2017 Senior Vice Commanders and Senior Vice Presidents new time is 1:30, 1:30 in Room 209-210 AB. Again, that's 1:30.

Junior Vice Commanders and Junior Vice Presidents for 2016-2017, new time is 1:30. 1:30. That'll be in room 211-212 AB.

There is no change to the All-American Commanders lunch. It will be at 12:45 in Room 217 ABCD. Again, All-American Commanders no change, 12:45 in Room 217 ABCD. Got it? Very good.

Chief.

REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Adjutant General.

At this time, we're going to have the Report on the Convention Credentials. Betty Gripp.

COMRADE BETTY GRIPP: Good morning, Commander-in-Chief, Council members, and delegates. At the close of business, 4:00 p.m., yesterday, July 25th, 2016, the total delegates registering their credentials are: 12,438; total department commanders, 48; total Past Commander-in-Chiefs, 23; total national officers, 61; grand total, 12,570. Total registered at the 117th Convention is 2,202.

That is my report, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Well, it's exciting to know we're all here. And before I start this introduction, I want to tell you how proud I am of all of you for just the deportment and conduct that you've exhibited during this week in some rather trying weather conditions and traffic conditions. But it seems that this city has reached out to us. And I certainly am enjoying myself. I hope you are.

(Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW HALL OF FAME AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Awarded annually, the VFW Hall of Fame Award is given to an individual whose distinguished service is rendered through outstanding contribution in the field of entertainment.

This award recognizes the service to our nation's veterans or Armed Forces in the form of entertainment. Actor, comedian, writer, producer, director, United States Marine Corps veteran, and VFW Life Member Rob Riggle encompasses every sense of what it means to receive the VFW Hall of Fame Award.

During the troop surge in 2007, Riggle spent a week in Iraq visiting with the troops through the USO's Operation Feel the Heat. From makeshift stages in 120-degree heat, he brought them that needed laughter and immeasurably boosting their morales.

You know, Riggle is known for memorable characters in many comedy hits, like "The Hangover," and for his stint as a correspondent on "The Daily Show" with John Stewart.

He's also appeared in comedy classics such as "Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby," "Stepbrothers," and "The Other Guys," and more.

And when he broke into comedy, Riggle was still on active duty in the United States Marine Corps.

You think there's a relationship there? Comedy, Marine Corps? I don't know.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Which he initially joined at the age of 19. Rising through the ranks, Riggle served in various countries, including Albania, Liberia, Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Riggle retired from the Marine Corps Reserve having served over 20 years and earning more than 21 medals.

He's filmed segments of "The Daily Show" as senior war correspondent, delivering comedy from the war zone to the living rooms across America with honor and esteem, showing America that among all the sacrifices that American troops were making, sense of humor was not one of them.

Throughout his career, Riggle has earned and maintained our respect and admiration through his legacy of service to our country. And today publicly

we wish to thank Riggle for his service and are proud to present him the Veterans of Foreign Wars 2016 Hall of Fame Award.

May I present Rob Riggle.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: VFW Hall of Fame Award and gold medal presented to Rob Riggle in heartfelt recognition of his fervent love of country and nominal American spirit he expresses so dynamically.

His generous efforts to sustain and improve the morale of the United States Service members, through his comedic talent, is a reflection of his patriotism as well as enthusiastic support of our service members, thus earning him the utmost respect and sincere admiration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 26th day of July, 2016, approved by the National Council, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; and John Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

RESPONSE BY ROB RIGGLE

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: Wow, thank you. Good morning.

(Good morning)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: That was quite an intro. I'm pretty awesome.

(Laughter)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: Well, I want to -- first of all, I want to thank the VFW leadership, Chief John Biedrzycki, thank you very much for that wonderful intro. And also thanks to the rest of the leadership, Francisca Guildford, John Hamilton, Bob Wallace, and Larry Maher. It looks like Maher. It's just Maher.

That's a Bishop Miede thing, I'm sure. Right? Okay. That's what I figured.

I am very honored to be here today. I thank you very much for this award and this honor. Standing among you is truly amazing. I feel very humbled.

First of all, I apologize I don't have a tie on. I forgot it. It's not that I'm trying to be all "Hollywood" on you. I just forgot my tie. It happens sometimes.

I will say that I think we're all here for the same reason: The air conditioning. Am I right?

(Laughter)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: Somebody asked me earlier, "Are you going to tell any jokes? Are you going to do a bunch of jokes?"

I don't have a whole lot of time to be up here. So I've only got a couple minutes. And I don't know any clean jokes. So the answer was no, I'm not going to do any. But -- well, I know one, I guess. Might be clean enough. I think it's clean enough I could share with you. And you've probably heard this one because you're all salty veterans, God bless you.

Apparently there was this Army guy who died. And that happens sometimes. And he went to heaven. And standing at the gates talking to St. Peter and St. Peter's like, "Come on in."

And he's like, "I'm not going in there if there's any Marines in there."

And he's like -- St. Peter's like, "Well, you don't have to worry about it. There's no Marines in heaven, I promise you."

He's like, "Well, good because those guys made my life, you know, pretty hard down on Earth."

He said, "Don't worry about it."

So the Army guy goes in. He's walking around heaven. There's pillars everywhere. It's beautiful. Angels flying around. First thing he sees this sharp-dressed Marine in dress blues just goes marching right by him, scares the tar out of him.

He runs back out to St. Peter, he says, "Hey, I thought you said there were no Marines in heaven."

And he said, "Oh, that's just God. He thinks he's a Marine."

(Applause and laughter)

You might notice I have on two pins today. One is mine and one is my grandfather's. My grandfather was a proud member of the VFW. He --

(Applause)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: He was in the Eighth Army Air Corps that served in World War II over in Europe in the European theater. He was an intel staff sergeant for the Eighth Army Air Corps. I think he wanted to be a pilot, but he did his job. He did it well.

And he even stayed after the war was over and went around and found the remains of downed air crews so he could bring -- bring those soldiers home. He would have loved to have been here. He's passed on now, but he would have loved to have been here. He was a very proud member of the VFW. That's why I'm wearing his pin today.

My pin, you know, people ask me all the time, "How did you get into the" -- "how did you go from Marine Corps to acting and comedy?"

Well, I think most Marines could make it in acting and comedy, if you ask me. I think they all have the -- they're all want-to-be comedians. I was a theater and film major in undergrad. I had my pilot's license in undergrad.

When you graduate as a theater and film major, you're going to be a waiter for a long time. But I got an air contract with the Marine Corps. I always wanted to serve my country so I did.

That's the beautiful thing about this country. You can have more than one dream. You can have as many dreams as you want, and you can pursue them all.

(Applause)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: So that's what I did. I just set my mind to it and did it. And, again, you know, it's a wonderful thing. I served in -- I did nine years of active, 14 in the Reserves.

On 9/11 I was in New York City. My Reserve unit was the only Reserve unit in Manhattan, so when they closed the bridges and the tunnels, we were activated actually on the night of September 11th.

The next morning, September 12th, I reported to Ground Zero and working on the bucket brigades, moving rubble by hand from Ground Zero. Did that for six days, 12 hours on and 12 hours off with my unit.

I was devastated like every other American. I was also -- I'll just say it, I was pissed off. And I was a captain in the Marine Corps, my country was just attacked, so I volunteered to go back on active duty. And I had a Green Badge at the time, so I knew they'd need me.

They picked me up on November 10th, 2001, my Marine Corps birthday. I reported to CENTCOM on November 17th, and I was in Afghanistan on November 30th. And so 20 days from the time I got my orders in New York City, I was in Afghanistan. And if you ever wonder why we have a Reserves, that's why we have Reserves right there.

(Applause)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: As I stand here, I was thinking about what I wanted to say because I only had a couple minutes. And I'm getting to the end here. But I was thinking about an old story that I read as part of my PME, my professional military education, about the first captain of the USS Essex, Captain David Porter.

In the war of 1812, in 1814, he was given the task of sailing out to the Pacific and wreaking havoc with the British whaling fleet out there. But before he set sail, he said -- he assembled his crew and he said, "I'm only taking people with me who want to go, who are prepared for the hardship and the fight that lays ahead."

And so he -- he said, "I want" -- "I want you to take seven steps forward if you're willing to come with me." And he turned his back and he waited.

And when he turned back around, the entire formation hadn't moved. So he laid into him like only a captain can, called them cowards, called them every name in the book until finally one of his lieutenants stepped forward and said, "Sir, the entire formation took seven steps forward."

And that's when he realized everybody was with him. And when I look out here, I see a group of people that at one time in their life took seven steps forward. So thank you for your service.

(Applause)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: We've got an exciting day. I think the Donald's going to be here today.

(Applause)

COMRADE ROB RIGGLE: And I -- I have no opinion on that. I'm -- you know, we -- I'm not going to say a word about that. Enjoy your day.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's the kind of entertainer I want to see on television. Somebody that doesn't use four-letter words and you can enjoy them.

(Applause)

*INTRODUCTION OF HONORABLE ROBERT PITTENGER,
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's now my privilege to introduce US Congressman Rob Pittenger, a representative for the citizens of North Carolina's Ninth Congressional District since 2013.

Mr. Pittenger served in the North Carolina Senate from 2003 to 2008 before being elected to his present district in the US Congress.

His top priorities include targeting terrorism; financing; advocating increased global cooperation in the fight against ISIS; and, of course, helping American families and businesses to protect against terrorist attacks.

Comrade and distinguished guests, please help me welcome from the North Carolina Ninth Congressional District, Congressman Rob Pittenger.

(Applause)

*REMARKS BY HONORABLE ROBERT PITTENGER,
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER: Thank you. Good morning.
(Morning)

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER: What a great privilege for me to be here with you this morning to honor you for what you've done on behalf of our country. You know, I'm a Texas boy. I grew up in Texas. My wife moved me to North Carolina --

(Applause)

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER: Hey. She moved me to North Carolina. She, unfortunately, didn't like Texas. So I came here 30 years ago.

But growing up in Texas, we had a famous judge named Judge Roy Bean. You remembered Judge Bean. He was the judge, he was the jury, he was the sheriff. He was everything about law and order in Texas.

On one occasion a couple cowboys got liquored up in the saloon, and they got in a fight with each other and one of them pulled out a gun and shot the other one.

And the judge came in and said, "Cowboy, it looks like we're going to have to hang you Saturday at noon out on the town square for killing this other cowboy.

So all the townfolk, they gathered out in the town square and put the cowboy up on the platform and put the noose around his neck. And the judge said, "Well, cowboy is there anything you'd like to say before we hang you?"

He said, "Nope."

Well, about that time at the back of the crowd out there in the square, there was this hand waving. And the judge looked back there, why, it was a big hand waving, it was a congressman.

And he said, "Congressman, is there something" -- "you have a concern?"

He said, "Well, if the cowboy don't have anything to say, I'd like to say something."

And the cowboy looked at the judge and said, "Judge, do you mind doing me a favor?"

"Whatever you want, Cowboy. This is your day."

And he said, "Do you mind hanging me before he speaks?"

Such is the life of a member of Congress. But we're here to honor you today. You know, as I walk up those worn stone steps at the Capitol every day to go vote and I look at the dome of that capitol, what do I see? Freedom, liberty, America, unique to the world.

As I travel the world, that dome is envied by every country in the world. And where did we get that freedom? Where did we get that liberty? We got it because of you. And that's why I'm so honored today to come and pay tribute to what you've done on behalf of our country.

We're so indebted to you for your commitment. The first time I moved to Washington, DC, was in 1975. I was there working for Bill Bright, president of an organization named Campus Crusade for Christ. I was in my mid 20s and I lived in a small apartment right behind Iwo Jima Memorial.

And every Tuesday at 5:00 o'clock, the Marine band would come and they would serenade right there on the base of Iwo Jima. It was so impressive, such a moving experience. And I tried to get back every Tuesday to watch it.

Well, one Tuesday in November of 1975, I came and there they were gathered around Iwo Jima, but it was different that day. They were dressed all in different uniforms. So I went down the steps, went out to the grounds, found a young officer. I said, "Sir, tell me why are you in different uniforms today?"

He said, "Sir, today's the 200th anniversary of the Marines. And those uniforms you see represent every battle and war we've fought in the last 200 years." My heart was gripped. Gripped with the reality of the hundreds of thousands, and, yes, over a million lives have been given to protect my freedom and my liberty.

We're so grateful for you. Our country is in so much debt to you. You have done your part to secure our freedom. You know, when they make those tombstones, we're all going to -- we won't see our own, but we'll see others. It says a -- the year they were born and the year, ultimately, they'll put on it they died, and in between it is a dash.

What's in that dash? What's in between the years we were born and the year we died? It's all about that dash. You-all have made a difference in

your dash. You've made a difference so that each one of us can live in this special, unique country that we need to preserve in every respect.

So we have much to do to support you. We need greater accountability. We need greater transparency inside the VA. And I know the Secretary, he's a man of integrity, and I appreciate the work that he's doing. It's massive work that needs to be done.

We don't need to have cost overruns of a billion dollars, wasting taxpayer money and money that could go to you. We need to have the ability for you to access the VA in a timely way. We have -- my district director's here today. He handles about 500 cases at any given time. Robert Becker.

So we have to be accountable to you. Over the last 18 months, we've passed 33 bills in the House of Representatives that would improve care for veterans, legislation allowing VA employees to be fired for misconduct, and legislation allowing bonuses to be a vote, for employees who contribute to poor care.

Building on these 33 bills is another bill that I have cosponsored with the chairman of our committee, Jeff Miller. It's called the VA Accountability Act. Here's what it does: It shortens the firing and demotion appeals process from the current one year average down to 77 days;

It strips senior executives of certain bureaucratic protections;

It streamlines the whistle-blower process. It provides new protection for whistle-blowers;

And, more importantly, it reforms the VA's broken disability benefits appeals process. It's got to be done.

(Applause)

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER: You have served our country honorably. You deserve the best from us and our commitment is to work with you in every way. One way that's been very important to me is through helping on PTSD.

We had a wonderful gentleman, Garland Denny, a veteran, died last October at age 84, but he worked tirelessly the last decade of his life to create a postage stamp for PTSD that would raise money to provide services for those who have suffered so severely from PTSD effects.

Well, I'm so pleased to say we wrote a letter -- I got my colleagues initially to write a letter to the Postmaster General to ask him for -- to be open to having this kind of stamp. And then at another time, we did another letter following up to that, where over 120 members cosigned another letter with me asking for this specific stamp to be approved.

And I'm so pleased that Secretary McDonald has approved that stamp and we're waiting for a committee to fulfill that. But this will be something very special that will raise tens of millions of dollars for veterans who are suffering so severely from this. We have much to do, but I would --

(Applause)

CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER: Yes, thank you.

Much more needs to be said, needs to be done. But know this, that you are loved by your country. Every one of you. This country was a gift from God. And we share the liberty and the privilege we have of living here; and to much is given, much is required.

So we are -- you've given much and we have much to give back to you. So know that we're committed in our Congress to provide the leadership that needs to be done to give the kind of transparency, the kind of accountability that's going to serve you for the honor that you've given to our country. Thank you so much. God bless you.

(Applause)

*INTRODUCTION OF ROBERT A. MCDONALD,
SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It is now my privilege to introduce the man with the toughest job in the country, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Robert A. McDonald. The Secretary hails from Indiana, and he grew up in Chicago.

He would graduate from West Point in the top 3 percent of his class of 1975, and served five years in uniform, primarily with the 82nd Airborne near Fort Bragg. Well, let's hear it, Airborne.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: He would join Proctor and Gamble in 1980 and worked his way up through the corporate ladder to become chairman and president and CEO of the company.

Two years ago, the president asked him to make and take control of the VA in a crisis situation, a nationwide crisis of access to care that severely damaged the confidence that American veterans must have in the Veterans Administration.

Proper leadership, management, and accountability are the only requirements the VFW has ever demanded from the VA. And despite a huge -- a huge plus up in emergency funding and the passage of Veterans Choice Programs, his department still has many challenges and many critics who would rather dismantle and privatize the VA than work with them to fix it.

Mr. Secretary, I promise the VFW will continue to be there to help you to fix the VA, just as we'll be there to point out the necessary course corrections too. Our job as veterans advocates is to ensure the VA's success. And I appreciate the fact the VFW is able to provide a voice that you want to hear.

Comrades, please welcome the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs, Bob McDonald.

(Applause)

*REMARKS BY ROBERT A. MCDONALD,
SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS*

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Big John Biedrzycki, thanks for that kind introduction, and thanks for an outstanding year of leadership of the VFW.

Brian Duffy, congratulations on your new job. We look forward to working with you. Congressman Pittenger, it's great to be back in North Carolina, particularly in the beautiful Ninth District. Your work bringing attention and understanding to the challenges of posttraumatic stress is incredibly important to us. We're happy to partner with you on the new stamp. And on behalf of all veterans, Mr. Congressman, thank you very much.

Bob Wallace, Gerry Manar, Francisca Guilford, other fellow veterans, colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for that warm welcome.

Bill Bradshaw, where are you? Bill? There's Bill over there. Three decades of hard work for the VFW and veterans.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Bill, congratulations on your retirement. We're proud of everything that you've done.

Bill's got two combat tours, and he flew 375 combat missions in Vietnam. 375 missions.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Now, Bill, I suspect that you flew into more than your fair share of hot LZ's. Earlier this month, President Obama presented the Medal of Honor to another Army aviator and Vietnam veteran named Charles Kettles.

In 1967, Charles Kettles volunteered to lead his flight of Hueys into the middle of a vicious firefight. They made that trip three times, carrying reinforcements in and carrying the wounded out.

And then Major Kettles went back once more, single ship, no cover, overloaded, leaking fuel tank, tail damaged, main rotor damaged, windshields gone. Indomitable courage, resilience, resolve, grit.

Veterans are the only ones who really know what it means to stand on that dangerous ground between freedom and tyranny. People miss that point, but it's the heart of the matter. Our nation owes so much.

Last March, I stood with Vietnam veterans at VA's nationwide commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War to honor those who came home and those who didn't. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and I laid a wreath at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington.

There are 58,000 names chiseled in those giant pieces of polished, black granite. They were husbands and wives, they were mothers and fathers, sons and daughters who sacrificed everything.

And those who did return, paid an enormous price. Veterans like Bill Bradshaw, veterans like Charles Kettles, like so many of you here this morning. If I may, let me ask all Vietnam veterans, if you're able, to please stand.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Thank you and welcome home.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Two years ago I sat before the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs for my confirmation. People who'd cut their teeth on Washington politics asked me, "Why do you want to be the Secretary of Veterans Affairs?"

And I told them, "There's no higher calling. There's no more noble mission."

When President Obama asked, I didn't hesitate. It's an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of my fellow veterans.

In my confirmation hearing, I pledged to work to transform the VA. I pledged to make dramatic changes. I pledged to improve your access to the high-quality care and benefits that you've earned and that you deserve. And I pledged to work with Congress, with our veterans service organizations, and with other stakeholders.

After confirmation, my first stop was Phoenix, Arizona; then Las Vegas, Nevada; then Memphis and Reno and Palo Alto and here in Charlotte. Across 23 cities, I counted thousands of veterans and I consulted with every one of them. I consulted with VA employees; with other stakeholders; and with VSO leadership, the VFW first among them.

We talked about how could we shape our MyVA transformation strategy so that VA would best serve veterans. And here's the point: It isn't my strategy; it's yours. It's not about me; it's all about you. It reflects your ideals, your insights, and your innovations.

Now, you've heard many times before that VA is broken. So I'll answer one question: Can the Department of Veterans Affairs be fixed? Can it be transformed? The answer is: Yes. Absolutely yes.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Not only can it be transformed, but transformation is well underway and we're already seeing results. Changing VA means changing leadership. So it's important that you know that 13 of our top 18 executives are new since I became Secretary. These are world-class enthusiastic business leaders and health care professionals. And eight of them are veterans, just like you and me.

It's important you know that since early last year, March of 2015, our new MyVA Advisory Committee has been hard at work. We created this committee to give us counsel and advice to transform the VA.

These members have brought extensive experience in customer service and organizational change. They're leaders in business, in medicine, in government, and in veteran advocacy.

Among them are veterans like Major General Joe Robles. After 30 years in the Army, Joe was president and CEO of USAA, one of the best customer service organizations in the world.

Dr. Richard Carmona is a Special Forces Vietnam veteran, and he was the 17th Surgeon General of the United States.

Navy Veteran Dr. Connie Mariano was the first military woman to serve as White house physician to the President of the United States. She was also the first woman director of the White House medical unit. And she's the first Filipino-American in US history to become a Navy rear admiral.

And you know all know Vietnam veteran and your executive director, Bob Wallace, who provides tremendously important counsel to us on this external advisory board.

Bob, thanks for helping us serve and helping us serve veterans better.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Now, these are innovative, resourceful, respected leaders who are all advising us on this important transformation. They know business. They know customer service. They know veterans.

It's important you know we're collaborating with world-class institutions like Johnson & Johnson, USAA, Starbucks, NASA, Kaiser Permanente, Hospital Corporation of America, Virginia Mason, Marriott, and Ritz-Carlton among many, many others.

It's also important you know we're partnered with respected organizations, like the YMCA, the Elks, the PenFed Foundation, LinkedIn, Coursera, Google, Walgreens, academic institutions, and other federal agencies and many more.

New leadership, innovative collaboration, expanded partnerships. All of that matters. These are powerful, productive relationships for only one reason and that's to serve veterans.

Over the last two years, we've help build a new national network of 67 community veteran engagement boards, or CVEB as we call them. CVEB partnerships leverage community assets, not just VA assets, to help ensure that we implement local solutions to meet the needs of veterans in our communities.

Our goal is to have 100 CVEBs across the country by the year's end. And if there's no CVEB in your particular community, let us know and let us help you make that happen.

Partnership is the foundation of our progress in ending veteran homelessness. The VA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Interagency Council on Homeless- -- Homelessness. Businesses, criminal justice systems, mental health nonprofits, the faith-based community and philanthropists all working together to end veterans homelessness.

That's partnership from the federal government to the state and to the grassroots level. Partnerships are why 28 communities and two states have achieved an effective end to veterans homelessness. They're why over 360,000 veterans and family members have been permanently housed, rapidly re-housed to -- or prevented from falling into homelessness.

Nationally, veterans homelessness is down 36 percent since 2010. The 2016 numbers will be out very soon, and we know we will see accelerated progress. We know it because of what we saw in Los Angeles, the top city in the country for homelessness.

Last year in LA, 2015, we cut veterans homelessness by more than 30 percent, about four times the rate of decline of the previous years.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: What does that mean? That means kids are getting their fathers back.

Rudy's combat experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan wracked him with PTSD. He ended up in jail. He ended up homeless. But now he's working on his bachelor of arts degree in social work. And he says life with his family is best and better than it's ever been.

Lonnie went from sleeping in his car. Now he has a job, a home, and he has hope. And because of him, his company is hiring other formerly-homeless veterans.

It means veterans who are homeless nearly 20 years are now working again in good jobs. Smiling, laughing, productive members of their community. So it really does matter.

Let me talk about VA health care. You know VA is the largest integrated health care system in the country. We have a unique lifetime relationship with our 9 million patients and a single electronic record across the entire enterprise. Nobody offers that.

Our mental health care is integrated with primary care, with specialty care, and with a psychosocial support to minimize barriers and help resolve problems early. Nobody offers that.

VA health care's whole veteran health care: Body, mind, soul, customized to meet veterans' needs. Yoga, acupuncture, sports therapy, music therapy, writing and art therapy. We validate and embrace what works to heal veterans.

And VA care is integrated with nonmedical determinants of health and well-being that people often miss. I'm talking about things like education services, career transition support, fiduciary services, pension resources, disability compensation, and many, many other others. Nobody, no other health care system in the country or the world offers that.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: And our Under Secretary of Health, Dr. David Shulkin, who's new since I became secretary, is changing our system to proactive holistic health care and wellness. It's time we got beyond just reacting to disease when it happens. We need to prevent the disease before it occurs.

Let me talk about access to VA health care. You should know that more veterans are coming to VA for our care and waiting less time. You should know that last year veterans had nearly 5 million more appointments than the previous

year. Almost 57 million were in VA facilities. Over 21 million were VA care in the communities in the community appointments.

Last March, veterans set a record for completed appointments: 5.3 million inside the VA. 730,000 more than in March of 2014.

Last March, veterans were issued 370,000 authorizations for care in the community. That's twice as many as in March of 2014.

These authorizations represent more than 2 million appointments for veterans in the months ahead. 97 percent of appointments are now completed within 30 days of veterans' preferred date. 86 percent are completed within seven days. And get this, 22 percent are completed the very same day.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: You should know that average wait time for primary care is around five days, six days for specialty care, and two days for mental health care.

And by December -- listen to this, by December, you can expect same-day access in primary care and same-day access in mental health care.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: By the way, VA is the only health care system that public reports on wait times as a measure of access. 90 percent of veterans we've surveyed are satisfied or completely satisfied with the timeliness of their care.

Now, we won't be satisfied until that 90 percent becomes 100 percent. So we're making important progress. But you rarely hear that in the media.

You'd never know we lead in many fields of research that benefit not just veterans but all Americans. PTSD, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, prosthetics, genetics, and many more.

You'd never know that the American Customer Satisfaction Index rated your National Cemetery Administration No. 1 in customer service for five years running.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: You'd also never know that J. D. Power rated your mail-order pharmacy the best in the country for customer satisfaction six years in a row.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: And not too long ago, all you heard about was our backlog. 611,000 claims waiting to be dealt with more than 125 days old. We added staff. We adjusted policies. And we designed an automated claims processing system.

Today that backlog of claims is down almost 90 percent. And the average waiting time for a completed claim is down 65 percent.

That's the work of some industrious people. Employees and leaders, many of them, if not most of them, veterans themselves. They're building a world-class customer service enterprise. You never read about it. Listening to

some people, we'd never know there's a decent person working at the VA, veteran or otherwise.

Well, these last two years, I've met and I've talked with thousands of VA employees and leaders in over 300 locations, many of them veterans just like you and just like me.

They're people like Victor Vasquez, who's a groundskeeper at the Fort Bliss National Cemetery. One older Veteran showed Victor a perfect place for a tree. So Victor, Foreman James Porter, Gardener Chris Smith, and Manny Vasquez with facilities maintenance got to work.

When the veteran came back a few days later, he found a tree right where he wanted it, shading his wife's grave.

Cathy DeNoble is a nurse with our DC home-based primary care office. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas, Cathy takes a holiday dinner to a veteran she cares for. He served in Iraq and he was a guard at Abu Ghraid. He's suffering severe PTSD and he doesn't get out of the house very much. You can understand that.

Chuck Mauldin's an emergency room nurse just up the highway here at Salisbury VAMC. One day Chuck was treating a veteran for blisters, and he literally gave the veteran the shoes off his feet. Why? Because the veteran needed better shoes. Because they fit. Because he cared. Because that's what we're about.

Our employees are good people. I'm proud of them. They care about us veterans. They want to serve us well. And we're equipping them with success -- for success.

They're not all perfect, not by a long shot. But it's a gross misrepresentation to cherry-pick the worst and hold them up like they represent VA employees. Just like it's a gross misrepresentation to hold up a bad veteran to represent all of us.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: It may be a distortion that sells papers, but it's a distortion that hurts veterans and hurts the good people caring for them.

Some claim there's no accountability at the VA. You don't think we hold people accountable? Tell that to the VA employee in Augusta, Georgia, who recently was convicted of falsifying health care records. He's facing sentencing that could include years in prison and hundreds of thousands of dollars of fines.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Tell it to some of the 3,750 employees that we've terminated in the past two years.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Some people think everything will be fine if we fire more people more quickly. That's not true. We can't fire our way to excellence. Over my 33 years in the private sector, I've never encountered an organization where firing people was a measure of leadership.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Now, consequences for behavior inconsistent with our values are part of effective leadership, and we are committed to that principle. But we won't punish people based on opinions, recycled and embellished media accounts, or external political pressure. It's not in the best interests of the veterans we serve. Excellence is what we're after.

So the right dialogue is about forward-looking leadership and sustainable accountability. Sustainable accountability gives you positive outcomes. Sustainable accountability is leaders and supervisors providing routine feedback, just like you remember in well-led, well-trained military outfits.

It's recognizing what's going well. Coaching and retraining when improvements are necessary. It's ensuring employees understand how their daily work supports our mission, our values, and our strategy. It's training leaders to lead and employees to exceed expectations every single day. And, yes, it's taking corrective action when it's warranted and supported by evidence.

These are all pretty simple concepts for veterans. They're not a surprise to you. These are the very same principles that built the greatest fighting force in the history of the world.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: Believe me, we're serious about the work we're doing for you. And we have the opportunity to look back at 2016 as the year we turned the corner for the veterans.

But there's some things we can't do without the help of Congress. It's important that you know that the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a budget nearly equal to the President's request.

The House, in contrast, proposed a \$1.5 billion reduction. That reduction will hurt veterans. It will impede some critical initiatives that transform the VA into the high-performing organization you deserve.

You should know there are more than 100 legislative proposals for veterans in the present 2017 budget. Many are absolutely vital to maintaining our ability to purchase non-VA care. Only Congress can modernize and clarify our purchase-care authorities. So there's a strong foundation for your access to community care in the years ahead.

Only Congress can clear the way for us to streamline our care in the community systems and programs. Get this, we submitted our plan to Congress last October, last October. But we need Congressional action to execute it.

Only Congress can enact legislation so we can better compete with the private sector, get the best medical professionals to choose to serve you in the VA.

And only Congress can modernize the archaic appeals process. Last year, the Board was adjudicating an appeal that originated 25 years ago, 25 years ago. And it had been decided more than 27 times.

Under current law, with no significant change in resources, the number of veterans waiting a decision will soar by 179 percent by 2027, from 500,000 to nearly 1.3 million.

So the VA, the VFW, and other veteran service organizations -- Veterans' Advocates, the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers -- shaped a simplified, streamlined, and fair appeals plan. It's your plan. You helped us create it. We've urged ambitious action by Congress. We need them to pass the law.

In five years, you could have appeals resolved within one year of filing. The legislation costs nothing. It's free and it'll be more efficient and less costly over time.

The alternative: Devoting more resources to a broken system and significant sustained funding to hire more employees administering a broken system. You'll be waiting ten years for a final decision on your appeal.

That's unacceptable to me. And I know it's unacceptable to you. We are veterans.

(Applause)

SECRETARY ROBERT MCDONALD: But these proposals require Congressional action. And veteran service organizations can help us get it done. 86 years ago last week, veteran service organizations made the Veterans Bureau happen.

Nine years later, VSOs made the Veterans Administration happen. VSOs got us the GI Bill. You got us the Montgomery GI Bill. You got us the Post-'11 GI Bill -- Post-9/11 GI Bill.

You're why President Reagan made VA a department, giving all of us a seat at the table for national affairs. And you're the ones who can keep veterans in control of how, when, and where they wish to be served. And that's what my VA -- that's what this transformation is all about.

Now, you're going to hear about a lot more recommendations about VA's future. Some have argued -- hard to believe, but some have argued VA can best serve veterans by shutting down VA health care altogether. They argue that closing VHA is the bold transformation veterans and families need, want, and deserve.

And I suspect that proposal serves some parties somewhere pretty well, but it's not transformational. It's more along the lines of dereliction. It doesn't serve veterans well and it certainly doesn't sit well with me.

So let's make sure there's substance to these discussions, that they're about veterans' interests and not some other interest. Let's make sure they're anchored to the service and the sacrifice, the sense of duty, the sense of honor that veterans represent and only, only veterans understand.

It's your VA. It's your VA. It always has been.

God bless you and your families. God bless veterans. And God bless the United States of America.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We're now going to take a short break, and I think you know what that's for. It will be ten minutes in place, and we're going to continue with the program.

(A recess was taken.)

*INTRODUCTION OF PRESUMPTIVE REPUBLICAN PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE DONALD TRUMP*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: May I have your attention, please. Comrades and sisters to the convention, please welcome this next guest. Our next guest is an American businessman, a television personality, an author, and now politician.

He was born in Queens, New York, and attended Fordham University in the Bronx before entering the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania, where he would earn a bachelor's degree in economics.

Comrades, may I present to you the Republican Party nominee to become the next president of the United States, Mr. Donald J. Trump.

(Applause)

*SPEECH BY PRESUMPTIVE REPUBLICAN PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE DONALD TRUMP*

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Thank you very much, everybody. Wow. Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: What a privilege to be here with the incredible - and I mean incredible -- men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: And we set today an all-time registration record. That's pretty good. Right? Congratulations to you.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Spending time with our veterans has been the greatest honor of this campaign.

I want to thank Commander-in-Chief Big John.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: And, really, for the welcome. He has been so fantastic from the time we walked in. He has been so fantastic.

Also many thanks to Bob Wallace; Auxiliary President, Francisca Guilford; and for your incoming leadership. You have Brian Duffy and Colette Bishop, two terrific people.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Two terrific people.

Before going any further today, I'd like to bring up onto the stage my good friend, Governor Mike Pence.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: And by the way, Mike is the son of a soldier and the father of a Marine. Mike?

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: Thank you, Mr. Trump.

Thank you to Commander Biedrzycki.

It's an honor to greet you-all at the 117th VFW where no one does more for veterans. Thanks for all you do.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: It is an honor to stand with Donald Trump today. It is even a greater honor for me to stand with those of you who have worn the uniform of the United States.

As Mr. Trump just said, I am -- I was not a soldier, but I am the son of a combat veteran who served in Korea.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: And I am the proud father of a United States Marine.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: And I feel a great indebtedness to all of you who served. And I -- and I'm proud of the record we had in the state of Indiana. You'll be glad to know in Indiana, where more than 500,000 veterans call home, we've made extraordinary commitments.

We've more than doubled the funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. We increased the number of county veterans service offices tenfold from 7 to 72 counties. And I'm proud to say the Hoosier State now has the second lowest unemployment rate for veterans in the United States of America.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: But I answered this call -- when Donald Trump called, I answered this call for a few very simple reasons.

Number one, I answered it because in these challenging times I believe we need renewed and strong American leadership at home and abroad. And Donald Trump will bring that leadership for this nation.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: Our military is too small and he will rebuild it.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: Our VA is broken and this builder will fix it.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: And it is extraordinary to think that yesterday in Philadelphia 61 speakers came to the podium and not one of them named ISIS

by name. This name will name our enemies without apology, and he will defeat them.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: So I say thank you to the VFW. I say thank you -- I say thank you to my new boss, a man who has given me the privilege to run and serve as Vice President of the United States of America.

And I pledge to you, each of you, that if we have the privilege to serve, I know this man's heart; I hear the way he speaks, when the cameras are off, about those who serve and those who have served; and we will ensure that our soldiers have the resources they need to complete their mission and come home safe.

And we will stand, as the VFW does, with him and her who will have borne the battle on their shoulders. We shall stand with our veterans, and we shall see our way forward as a nation. Thank you very much. And God bless you.

(Applause)

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE: And God bless the United States of America.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Thank you, Mike. And thanks again to everyone for inviting me to address you today.

("We love you.")

MR. DONALD TRUMP: The veterans -- I love you too.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: The Veterans of Foreign Wars represent the very, very best of America. When I'm president, I pledge to work closely with your organization and your members to accomplish our shared goals. Our veterans are the bravest and the finest people on earth.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: The members of your organization have fought for the American flag -- and boy have you fought -- on distant battlefields all across the world. Your members have shed their blood and poured out their hearts for this nation like nobody else. Our debt to you is eternal.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Yet our politicians have totally failed you. Our most basic commitment, to provide health and medical care to those who fought for us so bravely, has been violated completely. The VA scandals that have occurred are widespread and totally inexcusable.

As we know, many have died waiting for care that never came. A permanent stain on our government. Can you imagine the waste and corruption? And I'll tell you: We will find it and we will find it big league when I become president in January, 2017.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: I've recently released a detailed ten-step veterans reform plan, and we've worked on the plan with the chairman of the

Veterans Affairs Committee in the House and a really good guy who loves the vets, Jeff Miller.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: He is a good man.

We're going to take care of our veterans like they've never been taken care of before.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: The other candidate in this race -- you know her name: Crooked Hillary Clinton.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: And believe me, folks, she is crooked.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Has a much different view. She recently said of the VA scandal that it's not as widespread as it's been purported to be. It's like she's trying to sweep it under the rug. Which, by the way, politicians have done for years and years and years. It's going to be four more years of the same if she ever got in. But that's not going to happen.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Make America great again. You're right. Thank you.

We know how she takes care of the veterans. Just look at her invasion of Libya and her handling of Benghazi, a disaster. Or look at her emails, which put America's entire national security at risk.

("Lock her up.")

MR. DONALD TRUMP: And to think she was here yesterday. I guess she didn't do very well.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: We're going to bring honesty back to government and that starts with fixing the Veterans Administration. We will fix it.

Here is my ten-step plan for veterans reform: One, I will appoint a Secretary of Veterans Affairs who will make it their personal mission to clean up the VA. And this person -- man or a woman -- will be outstanding with an outstanding track record.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: In other words, a person that can get it done.

No. 2, I'm going to use every lawful authority to remove and discipline federal employees or managers who breach their public trust.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Three, I will ask Congress to pass a bill giving the VA Secretary full authority to remove or discipline any employee who risks the health, safety, or well-being of a veteran.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: I will appoint a commission to investigate all of the wrongdoing at the VA, of which there is plenty, and then present those findings to Congress as the basis for reforming the entire system.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Five, I'm going to make sure that the honest and dedicated people of the VA of which we have many, have their jobs protected and are put in line for promotion when they do a good job; we're going to get them promoted like they deserve.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: I will create a private White House hotline. This could keep me very busy at night, folks.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: This will take the place of Twitter.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: A lot of truth to that.

That is answered by a real person 24 hours a day to make sure that no valid complaint about the VA ever falls through the cracks.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Now, this is the tough part. This is the tough part. I will instruct my staff that if a valid complaint is not acted upon, then the issuer who brought it directly to me -- and I want to have it -- will bring it directly to me, and I will pick up the phone personally and get it completed and get it taken care of. That's a lot of work.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: We better do a good job because that's a lot of work. But I want to have somebody -- a real person and a really competent person -- in the White House with that hotline going. And if that person's not doing the job, I'm going to find out about it. And that's the best way to find out about it. That's called real life. That's called business.

Instead of giving bonuses to employees for wasting money, we are going to create a new incentive program that rewards employees for saving money and improving the quality of care.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Our Visa problems will be reformed to ensure that veterans are put in the front of the line for jobs in this country.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: They fought and they protect us. Now we're going to fight them. They're going to be put right in the front of the line. And these are our great people.

And by the way, Governor Pence is right at the top of the nation in employment for vets. And when he took over, he was No. 32 or 38. Now, he's right at the top. He has done an incredible job with respect to employment for vets.

So, Mike, good going and keep it going.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: We're going to increase the number of mental health care professionals and increase mental health outreach to veterans outside of the system. So important.

We're going to ensure every veteran in America gets timely access to top quality care, including the best care in the world for our female veterans.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: The veterans health system will remain a public system because it is a public trust. But never again will we allow any veteran to suffer or die waiting for care. That means veterans will have the right to go to a VA facility or the right to see a private doctor or clinic of their choice, whatever is fastest and best for the veteran.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: There'll be no more five-day waits in line. If you're waiting in line, you're going to go to a private doctor across the street, a private or public hospital across the street or nearby, and you're going to be taken care of quickly and efficiently.

People are waiting in line five days, six days, seven days, and many are dying. With a simple procedure, they would live. And they're dying because they can't even get to see their doctor.

So there's not going to be any more of that. And we will pick up the bill. It'll cost us less money, and the care will be amazing. Okay? You have my word on that.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Come January 20th, if I'm elected president, you are going to notice a change in the VA and in the whole entire government system, which is a mess.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: All you have to do is try to get on an airplane and you'll see what a mess it is.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: A change in attitude and a change in results will absolutely take place so fast right at the beginning. Government is going to start working for the people again.

The special interests opposing our reform -- and they do oppose it for their own reasons -- and reform for America, the same people who have led us to one economic and foreign policy disaster after another.

The global corporations and the media executives who oppose our plans -- and they are opposing them strongly -- we need plans for change. And we want to keep the system in place except for the section that's rigged and that's a lot of it.

We're getting rid of our rigged system. I started using that term a year and a half ago, and now everybody's using it. This morning I was watching one of the Democrats who I'd been talking about as a rigged system, he used the

word "rigged system." I'm going to have to come up now with another word. It's very sad.

(Laughter)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: But the system is rigged, so badly rigged. And it's rigged against the veterans too.

That's why their message is that things can't change. They can't change. With these people they can't change.

These are the same special interests who have driven the economy into the ground and who have created one calamity after another overseas. Horrible, horrible thought process. These Washington interests are telling Americans to stay the course.

They're telling us that we can't fix our trade deals, or we can't fix our VA, or we can't fix our broken tax system, or we can't fix immigration because they're benefiting from the status quo. They benefit. They don't want it changed. We need change. They don't want it changed.

My message is the opposite. Things have to change, and they have to change right now.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Here is just some of the change we need. We need to change our tax energy and regulatory policies to produce millions of new jobs and trillions in new wealth and invest in our country and in our infrastructure, which is falling apart all over this country. Our roads, our tunnels, our bridges, our airports. Our infrastructure is that of a Third-World country. Not anymore. And I'm very good at building. Remember that. And I build --

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: -- under time and under budget. Very important. You don't hear that from government very often.

Those who seek to raise taxes and expand regulation will only weaken our country, hamstringing our economy, and throw many millions more out of work. And as you know, Hillary Clinton wants to institute a massive tax increase. Massive tax increase. And we're already just about the highest taxed nation in the world.

Our immigration system must also be fixed so it lifts people out of poverty instead of throwing them into poverty, which is what it's doing right now.

Our terrible trade deals must be renegotiated completely. NAFTA is a disaster. To keep jobs and wealth in America. We're sending our jobs away. We're going to keep our jobs in America, and we're going to bring new jobs back.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: We need to change our foreign policy to focus on defeating and destroying ISIS, a word you didn't hear last night at the Democrat Convention. You didn't hear it. They don't want to talk about it. Because in a very true way, they really established ISIS because of weakness.

The people in this room know, better than anybody else or any other audience, what I mean by weakness. But because of weakness, ISIS has been established.

It's also essential that we suspend the refugee flows from Syria and other dangerous countries so we don't bring into the United States --

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: -- the same terrorism that our American soldiers are fighting overseas. We have to be smart.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Thank you.

Hillary Clinton wants to bring in -- if you can believe this -- 550 percent more than President Obama, more. And Tim Kaine wrote a letter, very recently, asking for more than even Hillary wants. What are we doing? What are we doing? We have to be the smart country again or we're in big, big trouble.

Our depleted military must be completely rebuilt.

Then from a position of strength and respect, America needs to extend our hand in friendship to foreign nations who want to be our friends. And we can't be taken advantage of by these countries that we work so closely with. Many of these countries are taking advantage of us, folks.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: They're taking advantage of us. We want to be friends, but they also have to be friends with us. Remember that. Something you've never heard from a politician.

We want a more peaceful future for our world. But peace will require new approaches, not relying on the same failed voices of the past. These are failed voices and now they want another four years. And we need to fix the VA so we never again break our sacred commitment to our veterans, never, ever again.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: We can do all of these things. We simply need to stop relying on the politicians who created these problems in the first place. They're not going to do anything. I call them all talk, no action. That's what they are. They're politicians. All talk, no action.

We can't fix a rigged system by electing the people who rigged it in the first place.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Let's reject the doubters and the cynics, and choose instead to believe in ourselves and in our country.

It's time to follow the example of our amazing veterans, who work together across racial lines, across income lines, across all lines in unity of mission and purpose. Nobody does it better than our veterans.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Let them be our guide. It's time to believe in each other and it's time again to believe in America.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: If we do this, we will truly, absolutely, 100 percent make America great again, greater than ever, ever, ever before.

Thank you very much. God bless you. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DONALD TRUMP: Thank you, everybody.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. What an exciting morning. The candidate has left the building so we're going to continue.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary meeting in Hall C will begin in 15 minutes. That's the VFW Auxiliary meeting will begin in Hall C in 15 minutes. We will continue our -- I'll give you a few moments to make your way, and then we're going to continue our business.

(A recess was taken.)

PRESENTATION OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, we will now reconvene the VFW 117th Convention. On behalf of Commander John Biedrzycki, it's truly a privilege and honor to present our next guest the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his many years of service to the VFW.

A military retiree, William "Bill" Bradshaw served with the United States Army, completing two tours in Vietnam and earning 16 awards of the Air Medal for participation in 375 aerial combat missions. He also received the Meritorious Service Medal.

Bill is proud to be a Life Member of VFW Post 284 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and began working for the VFW in 1985 as a claims consultant before moving quickly up the ranks.

A year after beginning employment in 1986, Bradshaw was promoted to appeals consultant and then quickly to field representative in 1987.

In 1994, Bradshaw was once again promoted. He became the Assistant Director of Field Services, where he oversaw the operations of various elements of the VFW field services, including the coordination of field visits at VA Medical Centers and regional offices.

In 2001, he was named the Director of National Veterans Services, a title he held until he retired just last year. Bill helped create and implement the VFW's Benefits Delivery at Discharge program, a program that now includes 19 offices across the nation, which guides military personnel through the claims process, answering questions about education, medical benefits, VA home loans, and far more.

Bill has dedicated his time, his energy and respect for veterans ensuring that veterans receive the benefits and entitlements they've earned and certainly deserve.

He has overseen the training of his staff so well that in just the last three years alone they have helped more than 255,000 veterans recover 4.5 billion in VA benefits.

His loyalty and commitment to veterans and our organization's mission has been truly extraordinary, and his contributions will not be forgotten.

Please join me in honoring William "Bill" Bradshaw with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation. Bill?

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to William Bradshaw in lasting appreciation and spirited recognition of his 31 years of exceptional and intrepid service of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

His steadfast commitment and benevolent concern for America's veterans, service members, and their families combined with his faithful dedication to the VFW mission has justly earned him the highest level of admiration and gratitude of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 26th day of July, 2016, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief, and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW

COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW: Commander-in-Chief and the Chair officers, all of the members of the VFW, especially Commanders, Post Commanders, Department Commanders, District Commanders --

(Laughter)

COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW: -- I like leaders, and that's one thing about the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I learned a lot after I left the Army and it helped me a lot with the leadership here in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

America needs you. You got such a noble mission. We've got to take care of those who take care of -- have taken care of America, just like you and I. And I miss every day since January the 22nd not going to work and seeing Bob Wallace. I'm thinking about stepping on -- sitting on the steps and maybe beg for money.

(Laughter)

COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW: But I'm sure Bob would have me locked up.

But I want to thank the National Veterans service staff, who were excellently trained. My job with them, to me, was to make sure that they respect each one of you in the Veterans of Foreign Wars and all veterans. They've got to love veterans. We've got to serve veterans. And if not, I terminated them. It's pretty simple.

But we've got to be the leader. It does a lot not only for our organization, but it does a lot for America. Thank you so much for what you've done for me, your support that you've done for me. And may God bless America.

(Standing ovation)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: We'll have one more hand for Bill Bradshaw.

(Applause)

*PRESENTATION OF THE VFW ACCREDITED SERVICE
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Comrades, in keeping with the same theme of veterans service, for the past 11 years our next guest has been the Department of New Hampshire's lone service officer with approximately 450 claims pending for the veterans he represents and assists. He's made it his mission to ensure America's veterans receive the help they deserve when facing the VA's red tape.

Comrade John Barrett served with the United States Navy from 1988 to '93. He served several tours of duty aboard the USS Kitty Hawk and the USS LaSalle and earns his VFW eligibility through his service in the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions.

After being medically retired from the Navy in 1994, his father, Albert, encouraged him to become involved and join the VFW.

Albert, a Vietnam veteran and a fellow VFW Life Member, inspired his son, John, to follow in his footsteps and serve his fellow brothers and sisters in arms.

Now, as a Life Member of VFW Post 8214 in Manchester, New Hampshire, John continues to demonstrate an inspiring level of commitment and dedication to America's heroes, from actively training year-round to ensure he's familiar with the VA's newest technology, to coordinating special outreach training for veterans and their spouses on survivor's benefits.

John continues to go above and beyond for the veterans and family members he supports. What a great reputation to the New Hampshire veterans community. Veterans who have had little success with VA representatives from other VSOs often seek John's counsel because they know of his unwavering commitment and dedication to resolving veterans' claims.

Please join me in welcoming the VFW Accredited Service Representative of the Year, Comrade John Barrett. John?

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: The VFW Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award 2015-2016 and Citation awarded to John A. Barrett, New Hampshire, in special recognition of exemplary achievements in support of veterans' service mission and programs of the Veterans of Foreign

Wars of the United States, thus earning him the distinction of the VFW Accredited Service Representative of the Year.

His remarkable and steadfast service to our nation's veterans on behalf of the VFW Department of New Hampshire is a great credit to himself, his department, and our entire organization. His actions make real the promise that no one does more for veterans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 26th day of July, 2016, signed by John A. Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY JOHN BARRETT

COMRADE JOHN BARRETT: Thank you. I haven't been up in front of so many people in my life. I'm petrified. But what I do, even though this award is given to an individual, it's really a tremendous team effort that makes everything for us to be successful, from our National Veterans Service Office, our staff in Washington who puts up with me calling constantly for all kinds of things, the help and advice and to be a therapist, to the Department of New Hampshire, who is my family. All of you have been wonderful support for my wife and I.

Also, my wife, who keeps me grounded, and my assistant at home, Nancy Warden. Because behind every successful service officer, there's a very tired assistant helping. So this is for her too.

But this is dedicated to my dad. He's a Vietnam vet, and he's given his life to helping veterans to make their lives better. And I just wanted to be a lot like him because he's my hero.

So this is for you, Dad, at home because I know you're getting better after your surgery. I love you very much. Take care, Dad.

Thank you.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: That's a program that we brought back this year with Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki leadership. And it's a program that I certainly plan on continuing. So I look forward to your participation by identifying those service officers that excel, and making sure that we consider them when we make the selection for next year.

*PRESENTATION OF SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: For more than a century the VFW has placed great emphasis on educating our nation's youth on Americanism, civic responsibility, and patriotism. Enacted in 1999, the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher's Award offers a way

to recognize teachers who strive to implement these core values into their classroom's daily curriculum.

Of the hundreds of nomination forms we received nationwide this year, three award recipients stand out as extraordinarily dedicated Americans who have undeniably exceeded their responsibilities as citizens of the United States through the art of teaching.

These teachers exemplify patriotism and were selected for their inventive teaching methods, creative class projects, and eye-opening trips used to encourage their students to become better citizens, while also passionately promoting America's history and its traditions.

Each of these recipients will receive the \$1,000 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award for personal development; and their schools, likewise, will receive a \$1,000 award.

I would like to take this moment to personally thank these three teachers and all of the teachers of America. Next to parents, teachers are the best influencers to students in becoming young, civic-minded patriots who perpetuate the values that make this nation great.

Thank you, teachers, and congratulations on a job well done.
(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF JESSICA MOSLEY - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: First up, I'm pleased to introduce to you the National Citizenship Education Teacher Award representing grades K through 5, a United States Navy Reservist, Jessica Mosley of Weiser, Idaho.

Having spent four years on active-duty service and currently is serving the Navy Reserves, it's no surprise that Jessica's military service has helped fuel her passion for teaching and enriching the lives of her fourth grade students at Park Intermediate School.

Jessica proudly sets an excellent example for her students; plays an integral role as a leader of several extracurricular groups; and uses every opportunity to educate her students on the importance of patriotism, civic responsibility, and, most importantly, flag etiquette.

Her many projects have included everything from dressing in uniform to participate in the school's special Flag Day ceremony during its Veterans Day assembly, to guiding and mentoring students considering a military career.

Her creative guidance has also lead students to creating handmade holiday cards that they send to deployed sailors and local hospitalized veterans.

Jessica successfully generated an atmosphere where not only her students but the entire school and surrounding community are encouraged and even energized to learn about our country and all of those who have sacrificed to defend her freedoms.

Please join me in welcoming VFW member US Navy Reservist Jessica Mosley, sponsored by VFW Post 2738 in Payette, Idaho. Jessica?

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: And now for the correct pronunciation of those towns, here's Jessica.

REMARKS BY JESSICA MOSLEY

MS. JESSICA MOSLEY: Good morning. All right. So I'm an elementary school teacher. We do things a little weird in our classroom sometimes. And one of the things that my kids love to do is to take selfies. And by "selfies," I mean we all get together as a group and we take them, we post them. We do them for everything we do, all the special events.

And right now, I'm going to take a selfie with all of you because my kids will love it. And what better selfie to have than one with all of America's heroes. So it'll probably be facing this way to avoid the big camera mess, so everyone over there wave because you're about to be on camera.

Thank you. All right. So first up --

(Applause)

MS. JESSICA MOSLEY: -- I would like to thank VFW Post 2738. Yes, I'm a member of it, but I couldn't have done any of this without them and especially with Denny Croner down there helping me. Any of you who know Denny know how tenacious he is. And when he sets his mind to something, it happens. He decided he wanted a national winner this year and, well, we made it happen. So thank you, Denny.

And I would also like to thank the entire state of Idaho delegate who has welcomed me in, made me a delegate as well and accepted me as one of their own. So thank you, guys. I appreciate it. Go Idaho.

(Applause)

MS. JESSICA MOSLEY: I would also like to thank my family, my husband, Scott, down there. Without his constant support, I couldn't do anything I do, that includes but certainly not limited to helping me arrange desks in my classroom for the fourth time in the same afternoon, to bringing me things I've forgotten at home -- because I do that a lot -- and to watching my kids so that I can stay late and work and get all of my papers graded and all of my assignments created.

He'll even bring me dinner. He's amazing. And that's just mentioning the support he gives my teaching career. I'm also an active Reservist, which means I do one weekend a month, two weeks a year. I leave to go to Florida next week, and he will be home being single dad with the family. So thank you for everything you do.

My kids, Damia and Austin, who put up with all of my late nights and getting to help me in my classroom as well, and not to mention having to share their mother with every other child in our hometown.

I would like to thank my principal, who nominated me for this. He said in the 18 years that he's been teaching he had never seen somebody he felt was more deserving of this award than myself. So it is a huge honor to have been nominated by him and my whole team.

Teaching is not a single thing. We work together as a team. So I couldn't do it without all of my fellow teachers.

And, of course, my students. If it wasn't for my students, I wouldn't have a job. So I appreciate them and everything that they do, as well.

The very first time -- my first year of teaching, Veterans Day was coming up and I told my students that I was a veteran. I was amazed at the response I got. It was immediately, "You can't be a veteran. You're a girl and you're not old."

And so from that moment, I made it one of my missions to teach my kids who veterans are, what they do, and why they do it; and that veterans come in every shape, size, color, gender, everything.

And that was the start of my Veterans Day lesson, which led to my Veterans Day assembly, which got even bigger and it gets bigger every year. And with that, I'm able to reach every student in my school district, at least once in their career, in teaching them what the military is, what they do, what a veteran is, and all of that stuff.

And throughout reaching every student, I get to teach them what was sacrificed, lost, and gained by our veterans, all of you. Because without each of you, everyone who has sacrificed something for our country so that we may have our freedoms and liberties.

So I want to thank every single one of you for this award. It is such an honor to get an award like this from the VFW.

And, once again, because when else am I going to have the opportunity? It might be five months away, but go Navy, beat Army.

(Applause)

MS. JESSICA MOSLEY: Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF DONNA KREGELKA - MIDDLE SCHOOL

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Okay. Next I'm pleased to introduce the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year representing grades 6 to 8, Donna Kregelka of Okemos, Michigan. As a daughter and niece of three World War II veterans, Donna grew up with a unique sense of patriotism and appreciation for our country; remembering her father's constant reminder that America's real heroes were the ones in the memorials and graves.

Donna has spent more than 30 years teaching citizenship and fostering love of country among her students. Donna has a strong history of creating and implementing activities that benefit both her students and their community, from her involvement in the school's Valentine for Veterans Program and its annual Veterans Day assembly, to her annual US Constitution party, where

students enjoy a buffet comprised of red, white, and blue foods while dressed in their most patriotic outfits.

Donna has exhibited a love and pride for our country that allows her to connect with her students and inspire them to be the best Americans that they can be.

Donna has successfully established a World War II class where with consistently full class rosters, she teaches students the significance of war and the importance of honoring and remembering the sacrifices of so many.

So please join me in welcoming Donna Kregelka, sponsored by Post 2406 in Charlotte, Michigan.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Donna.

REMARKS BY DONNA KREGELKA

MS. DONNA KREGELKA: The National Commander John Biedrzycki, state of Michigan VFW Commander Paul McIver, and honored guests, thank you for this prestigious award and allowing me to talk to you today.

I also would like to thank the VFW post, which I am now a member of, 2406, Commander Mark Williams; my dear eighth grade student, Julia Layton, who nominated me; her mother, Vikki; Holly Allison, who have been so kind and supportive.

And I'd also like to thank my best friend, Lynn Chevalier; her husband, Gary; her daughter, Nikki Kozarit -- oh, I screwed it up, didn't I? Koziarz. Got it. Okay -- her daughters, Taylor, Kennedy, and Hope. So thank you.

I've seen it written that it's the veteran, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press. It is the veteran, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

I grew up with a love of my country and a strong sense of patriotism and, of course, my dad watching every John Wayne movie ever made.

My dad and two uncles fought in World War II. One was a Navy fighter bomber pilot in the Pacific, and another fought in North Africa against Rommel.

My dad, now severely disabled by a stroke, was with the Fifth Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Red Diamond," and fought all through Europe.

I am so blessed to teach our young people to remember and honor you, our veterans. As a teacher, I believe it's my role to make sure our young people remember the sacrifices veterans have made, to be the guide from one generation to another, to pass all I hold dear in my heart to our future generations.

When I was starting up the World War II class, I asked my dad what he thought of the idea. He was touched and appreciative that the war would be remembered by young people. But he was worried that no one would really care and there'd be little interest. But he asked me if there was interest, would I please remember what sacrifices the people back home made.

Well, the class is constantly filled to capacity. And I can tell my dad young people do care and they do want to remember. We construct various battle boards in this class, and after we study the battle.

You cannot imagine how hard it was for me to hold back tears when as the groups presented their battle boards to our seniors at the senior center, a gentleman came up to one group of boys that had reconstructed the Battle of the Bulge.

"You know this battle?"

"Yes, sir, we studied it."

"Well, I was there. Thank you for remembering."

I have learned that most students did not know what Veterans Day was or meant. And I've learned that when they do know, they want to show respect and gratitude. They ask, "What's the best way to honor or salute a veteran?" You walk up and you say, "Thank you," is what they've learned.

I have learned that Marines and soldiers can be brought to tears when their son or daughter goes on stage and read that they are their son or daughter's heroes. It is so touching and it happens every year at our Veterans Day assembly.

I have learned that each veteran that came home believes the real heroes were the ones left behind. A student told me about his great uncle and why he never wore his medals, among them the Distinguished Flying Cross. His answer, "Because the people who died for the country never got a chance to wear them, so why should I?"

I have learned that a raggedy old pair of jungle boots sitting on the stage at my school's Veteran Day assembly meant more to a Vietnam veteran who wore them than any of us in the audience could imagine.

In short, I learned about Americans from all walks of life dedicated to the freedoms we enjoy today that know where the future of America lies.

And, lastly, I have learned, since receiving this award, that there are no more dedicated, amazing, kind people who love their country than our veterans.

We have many rights in this country. We can criticize our political leaders. We can write letters to the newspaper criticizing policies we don't like, and on and on. And why can we do this here? Because of you sitting in the audience, our veterans;

And because I've seen it written, "It is the soldier and the airmen, not the college professor, who's given us freedom of speech.

"It's the marine and sailor, not the preacher, who's given us freedom of religion.

"It is the Coast Guardman, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

"And it is the veteran who salutes the flag, who serves under the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who gives the protester the right to burn the flag."

And so thank you again for standing behind teachers who teach American students their history, America's history, and the sacrifices made to keep this country great. Thank you.

(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF WILLIAM ELLERY - HIGH SCHOOL

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: It is also my great pleasure that I introduce to you the National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year Award representing grades 9 through 12, William Ellery from Carmel, Indiana. Witnessing --

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: There's the Hoosier claps. There you go. I'm just down the road a little.

Witnessing military service and sacrifice firsthand as the son of a Cold War veteran and a younger brother who served during the Soviet Union's collapse, William formed an understanding of America's responsibility to acknowledge those that have borne the burden of protecting our freedom at a very young age.

For more than 20 years, William has used his classroom to aid his students in developing a keen appreciation and deep respect for those who have sacrificed so greatly to ensure that our way of life endures.

He brings history to life by incorporating veteran guest speakers into his lessons. Even taking students to meet and visit with Doolittle Raiders. He organizes a Veterans Day essay, where flags and pins are distributed, and has built a veterans memorial, and organizes trips for students to travel to the cemeteries of Europe and place US flags on the graves of America's fallen.

He has truly gone to great lengths to ensure his students develop a superior respect for America's veterans. And today we take a moment to thank him.

Please help me in welcoming William Ellery, sponsored by VFW Post 1003 in Carmel, Indiana.

William?

(Applause)

REMARKS BY WILLIAM ELLERY

MR. WILLIAM ELLERY: Hold on, I needed a drink of water, get the seat belt, I'm going to be sitting here for a minute.

Now first, I want to congratulate my peers over here. I cannot imagine dealing -- I taught Sunday school for the first time for my sixth-grade son. Realize, I teach high school juniors, all of whom are going -- Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate kids.

And the patience it takes for you guys, that's quite an accomplishment. And I would like to congratulate them. You'll find some similarities in some of our comments. Because while I do deal with a different age, clearly our profession's the same. So congratulations to both of you.

All right. So if you will indulge me for a little bit, it is very much my honor to address you today. I cannot convey easily what this means to me, both as a teacher and as a citizen patriot.

So in indulging me, please allow me to draw some attention to a few people who are here and few who are not here. We don't get this podium very often as teachers. First, my parents. They're seated in the front row here.

(Applause)

MR. WILLIAM ELLERY: My mother is a teacher and my father's an Air Force veteran, and later on a metallurgical engineer.

(Applause)

MR. WILLIAM ELLERY: My father instilled in me a sense of personal responsibility always exemplified -- and this you, in the audience, will certainly understand -- by unwavering self-discipline and self-sacrifice.

My mother demonstrated a commitment to learning and to traditional values that implanted in me a desire to learn and to teach and to always look for the good in life.

I also want to -- strong Hoosier presence here today, by the way. If you notice that the head of the VA is a Hoosier. Mike Pence is a Hoosier. And I've got a strong Hoosier contingent over here; It is Carmel, Indiana.

And I want to thank that post, the Stanley E. Banks 10003 (unintelligible). In general, their support has been unbelievable. And, in particular, I want to note two people from that: Tom Blandford and Richard Lawrence, who's the post commander. They have made this a journey that -- that most teachers do not get the opportunity to experience. And I thank you for from -- from the furthest reaches of my heart.

I certainly want to thank my principal. It's unusual, but my principal kind of gets out of my way. He asks me what I need rather than trying to give me parameters, and he allows me to do all the things I do with respect to veterans affairs.

Two last groups, I want to thank my own children. I would be remiss if I didn't mention them. They're not here, but they are watching on their iPads I was informed. My daughters, Maddie, Kenzie, and Reagan; and my son, Adam.

Through them, I'm reminded that education is something that we do at home as well. It's a weighty responsibility. They remind me to stay positive and playful and to make learning meaningful.

And, finally, to my wife, who's in the front row here. If you look at her, you will see that I very much married over my head. She is also -- she's there, you can put the camera on her, embarrass her.

She's also an accomplished historian herself, a history teacher. She sets the bar high. You'd be amazed at our discussions at the dinner table. And our

vacations are all history-driven. Three of our kids like that, one not so much, but she doesn't have a choice in the matter. But my wife is kind of the motive behind a lot of this stuff. So ...

(Applause)

MR. WILLIAM ELLERY: Okay. Now down to why I'm here. All of you in attendance – and it's -- it's odd that we get to address our heroes. That's something that the three of us are finding in common.

All of you in attendance, at some point in your lives, embraced the motto of "Duty, honor, and country." You stood a post. You sailed or flew to distant lands carrying the flag, and with it the hopes and dreams of our nation.

You missed signature events in the lives of your loved ones. Many of you sacrificed your youth. And all of you, all of you, left part of yourselves behind so that the rest of us can sleep under the blanket of freedom that you provide for us.

In so doing, you continue the long and proud tradition that began when patriots at Lexington and Concord decided that the cost of freedom was worth a similar sacrifice. And that continues in a long, unbroken line through all of you and through the men and women who patrol the seas and skies and roam the world today, seeking out those who would do us harm and protecting that same idea of freedom that was born 240 years ago.

Explaining the role of a citizen soldier is my responsibility as a teacher of history, as it is essential to the story of America freedom.

Thomas Jefferson bequeathed to all Americans, and indeed to all of us in this room, the duty of making sure that Lady Liberty's flame burns brightly when, in the last lines of the Declaration of Independence. He promised that America's founders would pledge unto each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors.

And all of you have similarly offered up your lives, foregone your fortunes, and defended America's sacred honor. So that motto that you follow, that you lived under -- "Duty, honor, and country" -- is central to what you've done and how you have lived.

As a teacher of history, I've examined the role of the citizen soldier over the course of this great nation. And I've come to believe that in my profession that motto of "Duty, honor, and country" is something to which all of us must strive in educating our students or else we're in danger of failing to live up to the legacy that the citizen soldier has provided for us.

You see, all of us can recall the names of great military leaders in the past. If you had a good history teacher, you certainly can. I can mention the likes of George Washington or Matt Anthony Wayne from the Revolution, Andrew Jackson from the War of 1812 and people have heard of them.

If I talk about Ulysses S. Grant or John J. Pershing, Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, Chester Nimitz, people nod in recognition. Mark Clark, William Westmoreland, Norman Schwarzkopf, people know them and it's my duty to teach about them.

More importantly, however, it's my duty to teach about the likes of Plumb Martin, a 15-year-old who fought for seven years in the American Revolution, eventually rising to sergeant; or to teach about Medal-of-Honor recipient Corporal Alvin York in the first world war, or about Captain Henry T. Waskow in the second world war.

And I became acutely aware of this responsibility in 2008. I was teaching about World War I, and a student asked when the last World War I veteran had died. I confidently asserted that it was some years prior.

And when class was over, I checked. And, low and behold, to my dismay, I discovered that there still was a living World War I veteran in the United States.

After some searching, I contacted Frank Buckles. And over Christmas break that year, my wife and I drove to the great state of West Virginia and interviewed the 106-year-old veteran in his house.

And I'd done my research and I knew that Frank Buckles had been 16 when he volunteered in 1917. So I confidently began, and I asked him, "Mr. Buckles, you lied about your age to join the Army. Please talk about that."

He responded, "Young man, I didn't lie. I misrepresented myself."

(Laughter)

MR. WILLIAM ELLERY: At that point, it became clear who the real teacher was. It also exemplified one of my core beliefs as a teacher and one that I always tell my students.

You see, modern education, unfortunately, is driven by testing and test scores. You'd be shocked to know how many standardized tests kids take and how much of education is crafted to teach to a test.

But something I learned along the way is that academics and education are not the same thing. Interviews, like the one I did with Frank Buckles, demonstrate the principle that kids should not let their academics get in the way of their education. Making sure that kids understand that is my duty too.

20 years ago, I started taking my students to Europe during the summer. The trips began as general history trips, during which we visited places of general historic interest. On my third trip, we were traveling near the American Cemetery at Lorraine France. And so we stopped for a visit.

I was struck by the profound power of the cemetery. It was readily apparent that it was a place of dignity and honor. It was worthy of every attention that we could give it.

From that point on, every trip that I've designed has been centered around a visit to American cemeteries in Europe, at which my students place flags by the graves of the Indiana dead who are buried there.

Over the years, I've had the opportunity to have students visit the graves of relatives who are buried overseas with their comrades. I've seen the toughest of students brought to their knees when looking at the site of a father and a son buried side by side in a land that they'd come so far to liberate and that they saw so briefly.

In 2011, we brought a Normandy veteran with us. We toured the Omaha and Utah Beaches and ended up at the America Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer. We arranged for our veteran, 90-year-old Lance Corporal Carl Hobson, to participate in the flag-lowering ceremony. Excuse me.

Major General Edward (unintelligible) happened to be there. He saluted Corporal Hobson first. It was never more clear that it was both my duty and my honor to provide this opportunity for my students.

Country is the last part of that motto of "Duty, honor, and country," and it's perhaps the most difficult to frame in context as both a teacher and as a historian. You see, we're supposed to be honest brokers of information and not cheerleaders. But I find it very hard to separate the two.

Over the years, I've had countless veterans speak with my students. I built a veterans memorial on my school grounds. I've hosted Veterans Day ceremonies at my schools. I've sponsored "Support the Troops" rallies. I have attended funerals for veterans, which families have played documentaries that my students have made. I've given veterans' eulogies. And I've endeavored to bring to light the role the citizen soldier has played in embodying all this great nation stands for.

I am reminded, as you were earlier, of Marines Corp Chaplain Father Denis Edward O'Brien's poem that "It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press.

"The soldier, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech.

"It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.

"It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag who allows the protester to burn the flag."

You see, the soldier is the country and the country is the soldier. They are inextricably linked. And while this country has on occasion erred, it has always, always righted the ship. And it has been the citizen soldier upon whose shoulder that responsibility has fallen.

So "Duty, honor, and country." Three elements that individually have strength, but collectively they have allowed us to forge the greatest nation in the history of man. It's my job, as a teacher of history, to convey that message and the story of the men and women who so ably and willingly defended it.

It's been my proudest professional moment to receive this award and to address you today. And please remember, do not let your academics get in the way of your education.

I thank you for your kind attention, and for all that our veterans have done and continue to do for this nation. May God bless our veterans. May God bless those who continue to keep us free. And always, may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Thanks, Bill, and thanks to all the winners of the teacher's award. There's a reason to start working on that,

if you haven't already started this year. Get those teacher award entries in the works.

*INTRODUCTION OF ANTHONY IMPERATO,
PRESIDENT OF HENRY REPEATING ARMS*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Joining us today is a man well known for giving back to service members and veterans, and he has become a great friend to the VFW, as president of a company whose namesake rifle is one of the most legendary, respected, and sought after in the history of firearms. And it's crafted under the motto "Made in America or not made at all."

It's not surprising that he is dedicated to America's veterans and keeping the jobs here on American soil. Here today for a special presentation, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr. Anthony Imperato, president and owner of Henry Repeating Arms. Tony?

(Applause)

REMARKS BY ANTHONY IMPERATO

MR. ANTHONY IMPERATO: Thank you, Commander, for your very kind words and heartfelt introduction. I certainly appreciate it. I'm always humbled to stand before great veterans, and I well up with pride and patriotism. So thank you all for your service.

Henry Repeating Arms will continue to support veterans organizations; our veterans, of course; and the VFW, most importantly, for their great endeavors and all that they do for our veterans. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

This morning I have the pleasure and the honor of recognizing a very deserving individual. We want to thank him, on behalf of Henry Repeating Arms, for his service to our country, for his service to the veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and all of his hard work and his dedication.

We'd like to honor him with a Henry Military Service Tribute Edition Rifle with a custom serial number using his initials and his date of birth. His initials happen to be JEH, but I won't give out his date of birth. All I can say is the Internet wasn't invented as yet.

So on behalf of Henry Repeating Arms, I'd like to bring up my dear friend, John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General, and honor him with a Henry Military Tribute Rifle. Thank you, sir.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Just don't give him the ammo.

(Laughter)

INTRODUCTION OF PRASAD REDDY, CEO, TWISTED X BOOTS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Over three decades ago, our next guest completed his American naturalism ceremony. He pledged to return the kindness, support, and encouragement he received from VFW members who welcomed him to America with smiles and a copy of the US Constitution.

Now, as president and CEO of Twisted X boots, Prasad Reddy has satisfied that pledge and then some. Even after presenting a donation of \$50,000, you may remember during our convention last year, Twisted X continues to support the VFW and our country's brave service members, veterans, and families.

Founded in 2005, Twisted X Boots has spent more than a decade designing, developing handcrafted, design patented, comfortable western and comfort casual footwear for men, women, and children. Twisted X also recently launched a new specialty line of patriotic VFW-inspired boots complete with unique American flag elements and has even made copies of the US Constitution available to consumers.

I'm pleased to introduce Prasad Reddy, founder, president, CEO, and American citizen, Twisted X Boots. Please give a warm welcome.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY PRASAD REDDY

MR. PRASAD REDDY: It's such a great honor and a privilege to be here with the true heroes of this country. Thank you very much for allowing me to come here and share a few minutes -- a few moments with you.

Whatever we do as a company, and me as an individual, is nothing to repay what sacrifices you all made, keep on making, and what the VFW organization does for the greatness of this country.

We are so happy to be a small part of this. And we always try to find: How can we help? You know, we sit down in the company: How can we help?

Well, one of the -- we are here to help. We have more than 2,000 retailers around the country that sell our products. And if there are any local VFW posts that need some sort of help and support, if they reach out to us we can find a local retailer -- like the Buddy Poppy program, I understand that it's getting harder and harder to find retailers who can host that.

We support that. And we'll find those people for you, find retailers for you. And in any other way we can help as a company, please let us know and we'll do that.

And now --

(Applause)

MR. PRASAD REDDY: -- just -- just to show a little appreciation for all what all you do and VFW does, we have a small contribution to VFW.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Twisted X brands in Decatur, Texas, pay to the order of Veterans of Foreign Wars, \$75,000.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Let me tell you if you weren't here last year, you know, Prasad came here and gave us 50,000. Then he came to us and said, "I want to give back to America's heroes. I want my brand to be locked at the hip with the VFW."

He raised 50,000 last year. And he said, "I'm going to do better this year, I promise you." And he came to us again, not asking for anything, wants to help the VFW and take care of America's heroes.

He's a true story of success in America. He came here as an immigrant basically with nothing, greeted by the VFW, gave him a little card with the Constitution in it, and he read it and they welcomed him to America.

He's never forgotten that -- and he's never forgotten that. And this is -- this melting pot has made America great. And he is a great American. I'm proud to call him my friend.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: And I promise you this -- I won't be here next year as your Adjutant General, but I promise you this -- I'll remain friends with him, and I promise you this: He'll do more next year. He's a great American and I'm proud of him.

Thank you, Prasad.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: You just never know. Something as small, perhaps not really a big event at your post, to go to a swearing-in ceremony welcoming new citizens into our country, presenting something like the US Constitution, and look where it's taken us.

All those little things that you do cumulatively make a big difference. And here is a prime example.

Thank you VFW. Thank You, Auxiliary. And thank you, sir.

(Applause)

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: This is truly an honor and a privilege for me to present our next guest with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his lasting years of dedicated service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Making a career in the United States Air Force --

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: -- John W. Stroud served from 1976 to 1997, including a tour in Korea from '92 to 1993 with the 51st Fighter Wing, based at Osan Air Base, as a flight operations superintendent.

John's many decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, three Air Force Commendation Medals, and three Air Force Achievement Medals, as well as the Korean Defense Service Medal.

John's involvement with the VFW began shortly after he saw a sign that read, "Active-duty military welcome," outside of VFW Post 10047 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

John saw that sign back in 1996. Dressed in fatigues, he entered the post and was immediately welcomed. Surrounded by his comrades, he learned of the organization's many programs and services. And he knew right then he wanted to belong.

Today Chief Stroud is it a Gold Legacy Life Member of Post 2313 in Hawthorne, Nevada. He has held several leadership positions in the VFW, including the Nevada Department Commander, Chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee, and reaching the pinnacle of his achievement in 2014 when he was elected VFW Commander-in-Chief.

During Chief Stroud's tenure as our National Commander, word of a secret VA waiting list surfaced and the VA crisis began to unfold. John led the VFW charge to ensure that the system the VFW helped to create would not fail our veterans.

With John at the helm of the VFW, we worked with Congress to pass significant VA health care reforms. And we published a detailed report on ways to improve VA care. We worked directly with the VA to implement reforms.

Chief Stroud helped lead our organization's successful fight against budget cuts that would have crippled government programs for veterans and ensured VFW programs and services remained strong.

John's commitment to veterans, service members, and their families, as well as to the mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Please join me in honoring past Commander-in-Chief John W. Stroud as I present him, on behalf of Commander John Biedrzycki, the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation.

John?

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to John W. Stroud, in lasting appreciation and the spirit of recognition of his 20 years of exceptional and intrepid service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

As an involved and active member, his loyal and successful tenure have included many leadership roles, including Department Judge Advocate; Department Surgeon; Department Commander, where he earned Triple Crown All-American Award status; Chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee; and, ultimately, as Commander-in-Chief, the pinnacle of VFW achievement.

His abiding commitment to America's veterans, service members, or families, along with his dedication to the VFW mission, have earned him the utmost appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 26th day of July, 2016. Signed by John E. -- excuse me, signed by John Biedrzycki, Junior, Commander-in-Chief; and John E. Hamilton, Adjutant General.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: I was proud to be welcomed into the National line office's chairs as part of the Stroud/Biedrzycki/Duffy team. Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STROUD

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF STROUD: I will be very brief. That's a change.

To everyone in this room and everyone on the stage, thank you for allowing me to have the greatest job in the world. God bless.

(Applause)

*INTRODUCTION OF COLONEL FLORENCE SUMPTER WINBUSH, ACTING
DIRECTOR, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR OF THE DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING
AGENCY (DPAA)*

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: You know, I'm learning this job. I wanted to make sure I didn't totally butcher her name, so I asked, but now I have to actually execute it.

My privilege to introduce the Acting Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and one of the VFW's newest Life Members, a retired Army colonel, Florence Sumpter Winbush.

The Colonel hails from Boston and began her military career as Private First Class in the Army Reserves back in 1983, then in the Massachusetts Army National Guard. She graduated in 1989 with honors from the University of Massachusetts, and nearby Suffolk University's ROTC program.

As a commissioned officer, she would serve in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Korea, Netherlands, and Afghanistan.

Prior to her military retirement in January of 2015, she was commander, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia.

Last October she was selected to serve as the Principal Director for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, but is now dual-hatted as the Agency's Director too.

As the Principal Director, Ms. Winbush is a senior civilian responsible for leading the Washington, DC, office in formulating policy, overseeing business development, and increasing outreach initiatives to achieve the Agency's goal of

providing families and the nation with the fullest possible accounting of missing personnel from past conflicts.

As the Acting Director, she now leads the entire Agency, which was created from merging three of the largest organizations that used to comprise the government's full accounting community.

Her job is the same as her predecessor organizations: To recover, identify, and return as many missing Americans as possible back home to their families, a mission which the VFW wholeheartedly supports.

Comrades, please welcome the Acting Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and a VFW Life Member, Comrade Winbush.

Colonel?

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COLONEL FLORENCE SUMPTER WINBUSH

COLONEL WINBUSH: Thank you, Chief.

Good morning.

(Good morning)

COLONEL WINBUSH: I'd like to thank Commander Biedrzycki for inviting me here today to talk a little bit about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's mission, our accomplishments, and just a little bit about our ongoing and planned initiatives.

I'm so honored to be here today, as the chief said, as one of VFW's newest Life Members.

And, Chief, I must sincerely apologize to the entire VFW comrade that it took me so long to join.

The VFW's stalwart commitment to serving veterans is admirable. You have been at the forefront championing retirement services legislation, while serving us directly by helping retiring service members navigate through the confusing and often frustrating retirement process. I am a beneficiary of that program.

So to Commander Biedrzycki and the entire VFW, from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for what you do on behalf of veterans every single day.

Since my arrival -- since my arrival at DPAA last October, I have acquired a distinct appreciation for what our agency is charged with doing; specifically, recovering, identifying, and accounting for our service members who continue to go missing or unaccounted for.

I have also met family members and heard their stories and witnessed their pain. I have visited the jungles of southeast Asia to see our operations up close. And I have met with veterans groups, family groups, and military service organizations.

And I'm just going to pause here for a minute. Can you advance the slide, please? Okay. And then one more. There we go, thank you.

Let me just say that I know firsthand that our nation, our leaders, and every single member of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is fully committed to providing the fullest possible accounting for our missing and unaccounted for.

Next slide.

In March, 2014, the Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, directed the consolidation of all accounting activities into a single civilian-led agency to account for servicemen and designated civilians missing and unaccounted for from past conflicts as far back as World War II.

In January of 2015, he activated the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency or DPAA. And you can rest assured that the DPAA team is dedicated, determined, and passionate about what we do every single day.

Our investigation and recovery teams span the globe searching for answers for families. As I speak to you today, recovery and investigative teams are deployed to France, Germany, Ukraine, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Tarawa.

With nearly 83,000 Americans still unaccounted for, it sometimes feels like a very daunting task, with a large portion of our losses located in difficult terrain in Asia Pacific, and with over 50,000 lost at sea or otherwise presumed unrecoverable.

What keeps us going, honestly are the families who wait. And as many of you know, time is not on their side.

In the past year, we have made some remarkable progress in DPAA. And 2016 will be the record year for us for identifications. We continue to refine and improve our processes for how we research, investigate, recover, and identify our missing and unaccounted for. And we are developing new technological solutions to improve our ability to provide information and to communicate to families.

I am confident that we now have the right processes and procedures in place as well as support from the most senior levels of the Department of Defense to continue our irreversible positive momentum.

Next slide, please.

Of course, none of these accomplishments could be realized without a workforce of talented and extremely dedicated professionals working together for the same purpose. The DPAA team consists of over 600 personnel, both military and civilian, from a variety of backgrounds and specialties.

And as you can see from the list on the slide, we are a highly professional force. In fact, many of the personnel have degrees I can't even pronounce.

We have offices located in Washington, DC; Dayton, Ohio; Omaha, Nebraska; Honolulu, Hawaii; Germany; Russia; Laos; Thailand; and Vietnam.

Next slide.

As part of the commitment to our families, DPAA conducts family member updates in cities across the country throughout the year. Most

recently, we were in Los Angeles, Honolulu, Atlanta, Seattle, Austin, and Boston, briefing nearly 1,000 family members on their loved ones' cases. Our next update will be held in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in September.

In February of this year, we completed productive trips to Russia, Germany, France, and the Netherlands to cover a host of issues strategically important to our mission in Europe and to further set the conditions for a successful US-Russia Joint Commission plenum on POW/MIA issues, which was held in May.

During this first plenary session, in more than ten years the US-Russia Joint Commission was reenergized, making progress with a unanimous agreement by both nations to expand archival research opportunities and a reaffirmation to work jointly to resolve cases of Russian and US service members still listed or missing -- still listed as missing or unaccounted for.

Next slide.

DPAA continues to make progress building on the strong foundation established in early 2015. Over the last 18 months, we have developed strategic plans and started working toward achieving our strategic vision. The DPAA operation plans for both 2017 and '18 were developed to meet our priorities for the next two years. This deliberate two-year horizon has brought our plans into alignment with DOD's resourcing cycle and has enabled us to synchronize our requirements with other supporting DOD organizations as well.

There is still much to be accomplished. And I am confident that I have the right team of professionals in place and support needed from outstanding organizations, such as the VFW to get the -- to get the job done.

Next slide.

One exciting initiative I would like to talk about briefly is strategic partnerships. Our ambitious partnering plan, which has already begun to bear fruit, is focused on entering into public, private, intergovernmental, and interagency partnerships.

Our efforts up until now were focused predominantly on recovery operations. However, we have begun to expand relationships to include nongovernmental organizations and volunteers worldwide for data archiving and file digitization.

We are working with universities, promoting the unique, highly technical and scientific aspects of our mission to attract graduate students needing practical field experience.

Several US and foreign historical groups, museums, and even family members are very familiar with many of our cases. And we must do a better job tapping into that knowledge base, as well.

A recent and very public example of partnership that many of you may be familiar with is the effort underway to recover US Marines from Tarawa. Thanks to our colleagues at History Flight, over 40 remains have been recovered and returned to the US for identification, to include Medal of Honor recipient First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman.

(Applause)

Next slide.

COLONEL WINBUSH: In DPAA, we have several core analytic investigative methods we use in order to make an identification. Methodical research and analysis goes into every case.

We gather information from multiple sources around the world, including archival information from foreign governments, DOD and other US government records, eyewitness interviews, and information from families before we launch an excavation or recovery mission.

Upon successful excavation of a site, even when we are pretty sure that we have recovered remains, DNA is what gives us the ironclad evidence that we have found who we were searching for.

Partnering with us in the DNA analysis work is the Armed Forces DNA Laboratory or AFDL, a forensic laboratory specializing in DNA testing run by the United States Armed Forces located at Dover Air Force Base.

Scientists at AFDL -- and I'm so proud to acknowledge this for them -- is that they have developed an exciting new DNA technique called next-generation DNA sequencing, or NGS. NGS has been successfully used to identify disinterred unknown service members from the Korean War whose remains were chemically treated in the 1950s, rendering traditional sequencing methods ineffective.

Next slide.

In closing, this has been a phenomenal convention. And I would like to thank you, the VFW, for being such strong advocates for our mission. Your commitment as the sole veterans service organization to return to southeast Asia every year since 1991; to Russia since 2004, except for the past two years; and now to China since 2008, your ability to engage in POW-related dialogue with nations around the world is admired and greatly appreciated.

You often go where others can't. And I personally thank you for all of your hard work. We look forward to continuing our collective efforts, working together to fulfill our nation's promise.

Thank you on behalf of the men and women of DPAA for continuing to remember the sacrifice made by so many who have gone before us.

If you have an opportunity, please take the time to visit our DPAA display booth in the exhibition hall, Booth No. 322. You can also visit our Web site, www.dpaa.mil. And also, like most great organizations, you can like us on Facebook.

May God bless you, the VFW, and our nation. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: There is another example, Comrades, was stated we're the only VSO that invests as much time, talent and treasure to make sure that America has a full accountability as possible.

The answer's real simple. No one does more for veterans than the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Now, welcoming back to our convention, our Commander-in-Chief, John Biedrzycki.

Commander?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Brian, for taking over while I visited the Auxiliary. They are well and raring to go for us again this coming year. And if you don't utilize the talents that we have over there with that great Auxiliary, shame on you and your posts, districts, and departments. But they're fine and they send their best.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VFW NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. Now, comes an interesting part that beats near and dear to all of our hearts.

Since 1925 the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, has remained a prominent representation of the very best that the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary has to offer.

There is no better example of how our organizations work together to support military families than by the services offered by the VFW National Home.

Joining us this morning are three amazing individuals, National Home Board President and Former National Auxiliary President, Virginia Carmen; Executive Director Patrice Green of the Home; and, more importantly, our 2016 Buddy Poppy Child, Jaeden Davis, who resides in the Ohio House.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY VFW'S NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN PRESIDENT VIRGINIA CARMEN

MS. VIRGINIA CARMEN: Thank you. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief John, for inviting the National Home to be with you today. It is my pleasure to serve on the National Home Board as its board president this year.

National Home Board consists of 12 members throughout the country who represent all of you on the National Home Board. Plus we have five ex officio members from the VFW and the Auxiliary on the board. Three of them are from the VFW, and they are the Adjutant General, John Hamilton; Quartermaster General Larry Maher; and the National Commander-in-Chief, John Biedrzycki.

You're all dedicated to our veterans and to the National Home. And I thank you for your expertise, your guidance, and your leadership at each and every meeting that we have.

I want to thank all of you, VFW comrades, for the good work being done at the National Home for Children and their families since 1925. It's possible because of your dedication and support.

As members of the VFW and Auxiliary, we can be very proud of what we have achieved at the National Home for Children for the past 91 years.

I invite all of you to attend our National Home workshop, which will be this afternoon from 3:00 until 4:00 in Room 203B. That's 203B. And we'll just keep it to an hour because we know you have a busy schedule and other things to do this evening.

You'll learn about all of the ways we are helping our veterans and their families. And you will learn what you can do to make sure all of our young families who may need our help know about the wonderful opportunity available to them at the National Home.

And thanks to all of you for visiting us at the National Home booth. We very much enjoyed meeting each of you and showing you a little bit more about our National Home, and the chance to personally thank you for all you do for us each and every day.

And now it's my pleasure to introduce to you our National Home Executive Director Patrice Green.

(Applause)

*REMARKS BY VFW'S NATIONAL HOME EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR PATRICE GREEN*

MS. PATRICE GREEN: Thank you, Virginia.

We do truly appreciate Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki's leadership this year and all that he has done to support the VFW National Home for Children.

As Virginia said, this year the National Home is in its 91st year of helping and honoring and giving hope to our young families of veterans who need us so much. It's a wonderful tribute to all of you that make that possible and has made it possible for 91 years.

Now, for those of you who haven't yet visited the National Home, we invite you to do that very, very soon. Because we know when you come and see the work that you've made possible, you'll continue to support and keep the National Home in your heart.

But in the meantime, we'd like you to meet a few of the children and families you're helping right now. And the best way we can do that here is by a video.

Will you please start the video?

(Whereupon, a video presentation was given at this time.)

MS. PATRICE GREEN: Thank you, John, and thank you to all of our VFW members. With your help, so many families of veterans' lives have been changed and they've been strengthened for the future.

And now, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our 2016-2017 VFW National Buddy Poppy, Jaeden Davis.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY MISS JAEDEN DAVIS

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: Good morning.
(Morning)

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: My name is Jaeden Davis, and I am 12 years old. I live in the Ohio House with my mom, two brothers, and two sisters. Their names are Dante, Joshua, Joannie Lynn, and Cheyenne.

I am in the seventh grade and my favorite subject in school is science. When I grow up, I want to either be a preschool teacher or a person who works with animals.

My hobbies I enjoy are volleyball and cheer. And I like to sing, but not in front of people.

(Laughter)

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: I don't have an animal at the 4-H Barn, but my brother Dante does. And so I've been up to the barn to see him work with the pigs.

I also love to play the piano. Our piano teacher at the National Home had a recital in May, and we were able to show off what we learned.

I like to live at the VFW because it has a gym to play basketball, volleyball, and all other sports or games you enjoy.

I also love the big house we are staying in. We used to live in an apartment, and it was very crowded with six people in such a small space.

My grades have also improved because the VFW provides us with a computer lab and a library for me to work on homework.

My mom and grandpa served in the US Air Force and my great-grandfather was an officer in World War II.

I am proud to be the Buddy Poppy and represent the VFW. It is an honor and privilege and a chance for me to give back. This experience is something I will remember for a lifetime.

All my best and thank you all.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You know we have a time-honored tradition that the Buddy Poppy Child will circulate among you for some of your free and generous donations.

But you know what? We're not going to do it this time. We're going to do it right before the election tomorrow morning when the room is full. So --

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: -- she'll be around in the morning. So bring your money, bring all those coins that you don't want to carry through the TSA and some greenbacks too, and we'll send her around and have a nice collection.

You are a lovely young lady.

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: So you're in the Buckeye House, huh? How long have you been at the National Home? Do you remember?

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: A couple months, I think.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Oh, a few months. That's wonderful. And your favorite subject in school is what?

MISS JAEDEN DAVIS: Science.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Science. Yep, there goes social studies again, doggone it. I taught, for 35 years, social studies.

Well, it's lovely to have you here. And we're very proud of you, and we hope that you continue to enjoy your life there at the National Home. And we expect to hear great things out of you, especially your piano playing. I think that's terrific.

What do you think, guys and gals? What do you think, Comrades?

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Oh, my, this is a collage of pictures when I was at the Home. And they got me hugging the bunny rabbits. Wow, that's great.

MS. VIRGINIA CARMEN: John, we also have a National Home shirt that we hope you wear with pride.

But in addition, we have one last thing, and that is a brick in your honor in the walkway of the National Home. And that will be placed this summer in your honor to remain there.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I have half a walkway now. Thank you.

MS. VIRGINIA CARMEN: You're welcome.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much.

All of you should have a brick at the National Home.

MS. VIRGINIA CARMEN: Thank you so much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's a nice way to make a donation. Thank you.

Wow. That's exciting. That's exciting.

*INTRODUCTION OF BUCK KERN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
SNOWBALL EXPRESS, AND DALIA BALLESTER, MANAGING
DIRECTOR, CUSTOMER CARE, AMERICAN AIRLINES*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. Let's move on. We have just a few items till we adjourn. Introduction, here we go. For ten years, Snowball Express has been dedicated to providing hope and happy memories to the children of those heroes who have died while on active duty since 9/11.

With American Airlines as their official airline, please give a warm VFW welcome to Buck Kern, who is the executive director of Snowball Express; and

Dalia Ballester, who is the managing director of customer service for American Airlines.

Well, maybe we can get some things done here while she's here. How about that, huh?

And so we're very happy to have them with us. And I had the good fortune of meeting with them at Washington, DC, during the last Memorial Day, and we presented them with a check. And they had a float in the parade. And an old friend of ours was there who supports Snowball Express, Tony Orlando. And so that was a lot of fun.

And so I bring on Buck, come forward, please, and Dalia. It's nice to have you here. Welcome Snowball Express.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY BUCK KERN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SNOWBALL EXPRESS

MR. BUCK KERN: We're here today simply to say thank you. When most people think Snowball Express, they don't think of military, any military organization. But I will tell you when the children -- when the Gold Star children of this nation's military hear the phrase "Snowball Express," they are inspired and it brings a smile to their face.

This year, we had the great pleasure of meeting with the VFW and telling our story. And then we had the immense pleasure of being able to have the VFW stand by our side to support these kids and their surviving parents.

What we do is a little unique. We -- we connect kids. We help them build self-esteem. We make them prouder of the sacrifice of their fallen hero. We show them that this nation has not forgotten them and will never forget the sacrifice of their dad or their mom.

We host events around the country, one-day events to bring these kids together and connect them during the year. And at the end of the year we hold the largest gathering of children and their families, Gold Star children and families, in the world. We will bring together nearly 2,000 children with their surviving parent this December, on December 11th.

The men and women of the VFW will help that happen. And with your donation, your sponsorship, your support, you've assured that we are able to do that and fulfill our mission.

Our presenting sponsor, American Airlines, helps that. We couldn't do that without American. They actually donate ten chartered airplanes every year since 2007. They have been our partner --

(Applause)

MR. BUCK KERN: Yep, absolutely. I'll bet you most people, when I say that, don't realize what an amazing company American Airlines is. And I know that it's a perfect fit, VFW, Snowball Express, American Airlines. American Airlines is a sponsor of this great convention.

And as your motto is "No one does more for veterans," I can tell you, from observing American Airlines over the years, no other airline does more for our veterans either. Ten airplanes --

(Applause)

MR. BUCK KERN: -- bringing all of these families together, and we -- we literally change lives. And I see it every year.

So all of you, thank you. I will turn this over to Dalia for a few comments. And then together we're going to give a special recognition and thank you to Commander Biedrzycki and the VFW organization as a token of our gratitude, and to let you know how proud we are to stand with you and have you stand with us to serve these kids.

Dalia?

*REMARKS BY MS. DALIA BALLESTER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER CARE, AMERICAN AIRLINES*

MS. DALIA BALLESTER: Thank you, Buck.

On behalf of the 100,000 employees at American Airlines, I'd like to take a moment to thank you all for the service that you've provided to our great nation. More than 11,000 of those employees are based here in the Charlotte airport. So we'd like to welcome you all to our great city.

American Airlines is proud to be the official airline of the 117th National VFW Convention, which represents over 1.7 million members all around the world.

As the daughter of a Korean War veteran and the proud mother of two active-duty military soldiers, men, I have -- I'm honored to speak in this convention and to represent my airline.

My oldest son, Ramone, is a Marine Hornet pilot who's currently flying over the Middle East, returning from his six-month deployment this October.

My youngest son, Eric --

(Applause)

MS. DALIA BALLESTER: Thank you.

My youngest son, Eric, is an airman combat controller with the 24th, who's currently at home, safe, near Aberdeen. However, he has --

(Applause)

MS. DALIA BALLESTER: Thank you.

He's successfully done 12 -- over 12 tours of duty in the Middle East and is the recipient of the Bronze Medal for Valor.

(Applause)

MS. DALIA BALLESTER: Thank you.

As both an employee of the airline and as a military family member, I'm proud of American Airlines's support for the hundreds of military organizations across the nation.

In addition to Snowball Express, American supports organizations like the Medal -- Medal of Honor Foundation, the Gary Sinise Foundation, and many, many more.

I invite you-all to find out how your local VFW posts can get involved in the Snowball Express this December by visiting www.SnowballExpress.org.

Thank you.

(Applause)

*PRESENTATION TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN BIEDRZYCKI
FROM SNOWBALL EXPRESS*

MR. BUCK KERN: Okay. Now, we will make a presentation to -- who is it -- was it -- what was he called earlier? Big John by Mr. Trump, I think it was? Big John.

Commander?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you. I resemble that remark.

MR. BUCK KERN: You do. It is our pleasure, and I will read it with my glasses -- with my glasses on because I can't see any other way.

"In recognition" -- "in recognition of outstanding partnership and invaluable support for the children and spouses of America's fallen military heroes, the leadership and members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars have helped make certain that Snowball Express achieves their mission of providing hope and creating new, happy memories for the children of our fallen military heroes.

"The selfless actions of your members who dedicate every minute of every day to ensure that no one does more for veterans is a testament to the exceptional character of your great organization.

"On behalf of Snowball Express, we offer our sincere thanks to each member of the VFW for your outstanding service."

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That was a beautiful citation and a beautiful photo. I wish you could see it. It's a picture of a child who had written a message to her father on a balloon, and they were doing a balloon release and she put on it, "I miss you, Daddy. I love you."

That's the kind of work that they do at Snowball Express, and I think we should be involved with it. I will see that that is taken to National Headquarters and displayed -- displayed prominently in a place that every- -- all who come can see it.

*PRESENTATION FROM VFW
ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTERS ASSOCIATION*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. Let's move on. We have next a special presentation from the VFW Adjutant/Quartermasters Association.

Please welcome Comrade Herb Schwartzkopf, an Adjutant Quartermaster for the VFW Department of Kansas.

(Applause)

*PRESENTATION BY COMRADE HERB SCHWARTZKOPF,
ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTERS, DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS*

ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER HERB SCHWARTZKOPF: Good morning, Comrades. It is our pleasure – I have with me several comrades and members of the Department Adjutant Quartermasters Association. And it is our pleasure to present a check to veterans military family support in the amount of \$2,000.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER HERB SCHWARTZKOPF: My pleasure. We'll keep working. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much.

Comrade Quartermaster General, this belongs to you.

Adjutant/quartermasters, one of the unsung heroes of all of our posts and departments. They work hard, don't they? Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Let's thank you, thank you for that kindness of.

CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Before we close, we're going to have a few announcements by our Adjutant General. John?

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, sir.

I want to remind everyone 2016-2017 Department Commanders, the new time for the lunch is 1:15 in Room 213 ABC, just as I announced this morning.

The 2016-2017 Senior Vice Commander and Presidents, new time is 1:30, again, in Room 209-210 AB.

And the '16-'17 Junior Vice Commanders and Junior Vice Presidents, new time again is 1:30 in room 211-212 AB.

No change to the All-Americans lunch -- luncheon, which will be at 12:45 in Room 217 ABC.

The 2004-2005 state commanders Rough -- Tough Riders, excuse me, will meet briefly in the rear of the hall immediately following the adjournment of this session. That's the 2004-2005 state commanders.

Now, I want to remind you also, again, about the Patriotic Rally, masting of the Colors, the swearing of 20 -- I think 20 people into the Army. The Chief will make his comments.

We'll then have a 90-minute show from the Oak Ridge Boys. And then we'll have a pretty damn nice fireworks display.

So it's going to be a special night. I would urge you -- the buses are going to pick up at the hotels at 5:00. I would urge you to be out there a little before 5:00 to catch the bus. Because as soon as you -- the quicker you get there, the better seats you're going to get. And it's going to be full, I'm sure. And the buses will run up to 10:30 to take you home tonight, back to your hotels.

So try to get there as early as you can. Wear your patriotic colors. It's casual. You'll be able to buy refreshments. You can buy sodas and beer and sandwiches and stuff at the ballpark, just like you're going to a ballgame. So it's going to be a lot of great fun.

All right, Chief?

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. We're going to have our closing ceremonies.

Sergeant-at-Arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We will now have the closing.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. National Sergeants, attention.

Comrades, please rise for the closing prayer, and then a salute to the Colors.

CLOSING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Let us pray. Dear Lord, once again we are grateful again for this time together. As we go about our other duties today, help us to always be kind and courteous to each other.

Let us always remember that You are walking with us and that should always be our guide. We have more work to accomplish and, as always, we are asking You to help us in completing it. Be our guide and watch over us that we may meet again tomorrow to complete our work. In Your name we pray. Amen.

(Amen)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the flag of the United States, join me in the salute.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the close of this session has been completed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you very much, Sergeant.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We are adjourned until 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:02 p.m., to reconvene on
Wednesday, July 27th, 2016, at 8:00 a.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY MORNING, JULY 27, 2016

(The Third Business Session of the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, was called to order at 8:02 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: May I have your attention, please? I'll now reconvene the 117th National Convention.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you'll please conduct the opening ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

National Sergeants, attention.

Comrades, please rise for the opening prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comrade National Chaplain.

OPENING PRAYER

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GUEST: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we are setting about electing officers for the ensuing year, decisions that will directly affect our organization not only for the ensuing year but possibly for years to come. We want to make the right choices and we know that with Your guidance, we will.

You have watched over these comrades not only in the crucible of combat, but in the career paths they chose and their career in the VFW. With that in mind, we ask that You continue to watch and guide them.

As we finish business today, we once again want to thank You for all that You have given us, and may You continue Your blessings on us. In Your name we pray, amen.

(Amen)

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrades, facing the flag of the United States, join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance were given at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the opening of this Business Session has been completed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Thank you.

National Sergeants, right face.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Good morning.

(Good morning)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, at least I can hear you. I'd like to call the report of the convention credentials committee for the final report. Betty Gripp.

FINAL REPORT OF CONVENTION CREDENTIALS

COMRADE GRIPP: Good morning.

(Good morning)

COMRADE GRIPP: At the close of business 4:00 p.m. yesterday, July 26th, 2016, the total delegates registering their credentials are 12,489;

Total department commanders, 48;

Total past commander-in-chiefs, 23;

Total national officers, 61;

Grand total, 12,621;

Total registered for the 117th National Convention is 2,237.

Commander-in-Chief, it's a pleasure doing business with you. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

All right. We're going to have some announcements.

Thank you, Betty.

That committee did a tremendous job. And I certainly were very pleased with the number of delegates. Let's hope we can increase next year.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Comrades, standing behind me are the elite, our VFW National Sergeants-at-Arms. I want to express my appreciation to this group of Comrades we see annually at the national convention and our Washington conference.

They are the first ones in the hall and among the last ones to leave. They work long, hard hours in order to ensure the success of our national meeting. These folks are highly -- are strictly volunteers, so obviously this is mostly a labor of love for them. I'm sure that everyone recognizes what an outstanding job they do for the VFW.

It is now my privilege to introduce the National Sergeants.

Bryan P. O'Brien is a Life Member of Post 2550 in Dunedin, Florida. He has been a member of the Sergeants-at-Arms for 17 years. He is a past All-State Post Commander, past District Commander, past County Council member, and

was the Department of Massachusetts State Surgeon for 2015-2016. In 1982, Bryan was named a VFW Young Veteran of the Year.

After working for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for 31 years as a senior controller and supervisor in Boston, Bryan is now retired and a member of the Massachusetts Policemen's Association. He is simply an outstanding leader with ultimate character and integrity.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Gary Barringer has been a sergeant for 21 years. He's a Life Member of VFW and the Military Order of the Cootie, DAV, AMVETS, VVA, NRA, and the National Guard Association. He is also a member of the American Legion. He retired from North Carolina National Guard after 34 years of service, and also retired from Norfolk Southern Railroad after 22 years.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I'm not through with Gary. Gary is a veteran of – Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service representative for the Department of North Carolina at the W. G. "Bill" Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, North Carolina. Thank you, sir.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: We've got more. Let's see, he is a past Department Commander of North Carolina, a State Sergeant-at-Arms, and has been the Quartermaster of 9134 in Rockwell, North Carolina, for almost 30 years. Gary is a member of the Rockwell Rural Fire Department, where he is also a medical responder, and works as a security guard part- -- part-time. That takes care of Gary. Sorry.

Thank you, Gary.

Joy Ausman has been a member of the Sergeants for 20 years, and is a Life Member of Lewiston, Idaho, Post 10043 and Cloquet, Minnesota, VFW Auxiliary to Post 3979. She's a past District Commander, Quartermaster, past Post Commander; is currently employed by Clearwater Paper Corporation as Director of Health and Safety. Thank you, ma'am.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Joe is not here. Right? Well, I'm going to read this.

Joe is a Gold Legacy -- he's not here. But Joe is a Gold Legacy -- it's unbelievable the number of years. Joe is a Gold Legacy Life Member of Post 4847 in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

His volunteer work spans decades: 10 years as the Minnesota State Officer of the Guard; Minnesota State Surgeon for 19 years; State Chaplain for 15 years; Big Ten Sergeant-at-Arms for 56 years; and a District 6 Officer of the Day for 56 years as well. He retired from the Burlington Northern Railroad with 35 years of service.

As a result of more than 50,000 hours of volunteer service at the VA hospital, he has received the VFW National Hospital Award, Volunteer of the

Year Award, and the Cootie Supreme Award, and a Life Achievement -- a Cootie Life Achievement Award. In 2015, he received a Certificate of Appreciation from St. Cloud State University for his dedication and support of veterans, service members, and their families.

We had hoped to present Joe with a Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit during Monday's Business Session for his notable record of outstanding service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

But unfortunately, for the first time in many years, Joe isn't able to be here at this convention. He's having little health issues. So keep Joe in your thoughts and in your prayers. And let's give Joe a big hand. I'm sure he's watching this streaming.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Next is Jim Galen who has been a sergeant for 14 years and is a Life Member of Post 6802 in Richmond, Michigan. He is a past All-State Post Commander and past All-State Post Quartermaster. He served as a Post Quartermaster for 18 years and is a past District 5 Commander. Jim retired after 30 years of service from General Motors. Thank you, Jim.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Keith MacDonald has been a sergeant for 22 years and he's a Life Member of Post 2275 in El Cajone --

Is that right? Is that how you pronounce it? Cajon. Did I say cajones? What the hell's wrong with me?

(Laughter)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: I'll tell you. California. Damn, I'm sorry.

He is retired from the United States Navy after 23 years, and a half -- and half as a Senior Chief Petty Officer. Keith is a past All-American Post Commander and All-American District Commander. Thank you, Keith.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: George Lott has been a National Sergeant for 6 years and is a Gold Legacy Life Member. He is a past Commander of Lieutenant Robert A. Madden, Post 10152 in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, and is a Past New Jersey District 21 Commander. He is a United States Army combat veteran and a former Army drill sergeant, where he taught basic training in Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Currently, he serves as Department of Jersey Sergeant-at-Arms and has held that position for 28 years. George is employed as a police officer in Ogdensburg for 34 years and retired in 2008 as the Chief of Police. Thank you, sir.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Our newest Sergeant, Gary Gamble, has been a sergeant for one year. He served in the United States Marine Corps

-- oorah -- and retired after 20 years of service in the Reserves at rank of gunnery sergeant.

Gary is a Life Member of Post 345 in Redford, Michigan. He is a past All-State Post Commander, and has served on many national committees to include -- including his current position, and also a District 4 Senior Vice Commander. Gary also serves as a captain in Department of Michigan Honor Guard.

He's employed by BorgWarner Corporation in Auburn Hills, Michigan, as a technical specialist. Thank you, sir.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: These are the comrades we depend on so much. Sometimes we forget to express our gratitude. So at this time, I would like to publicly say thank you to each and every one of you.

All of you do a superlative job and represent this organization well. I am proud of the professional way in which you always conduct yourselves. And I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with you. On behalf of the entire organization, thank you for your service.

(Standing ovation)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I just appreciate the fact they march in step. They can still do it. They look good. We're proud of them.

*GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION - COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN BIEDRZYCKI
TO VFW AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT FRANCISCA GUILFORD*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Okay. Let's move on. Now, I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention this morning is a woman with whom I was proud to serve during this past year. Francisca Guilford has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Auxiliary to the VFW for many years and has left an incredible legacy for others to follow in the years to come.

I admire her deeply. She is a true compatriot and an outstanding leader. Please welcome a wonderful woman from Anchorage, Alaska, Francisca Guilford, National President of the VFW Auxiliary.

(Standing ovation)

*REMARKS BY FRANCISCA GUILFORD, NATIONAL PRESIDENT
OF THE VFW AUXILIARY*

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: Good morning.

(Good morning)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, National officers, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars members, it is a privilege for me to be here with you this morning and to have the opportunity to greet you one more time as the National President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. This is --

(Applause)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: This has been a historical year for our organization. And I have each and every one of you to thank you for that. You open our eligibility to reflect all of our Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and we allow us to reach 100 percent in membership for the first time since 1993.

(Applause)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: Thank you.

These are your family members, and it is all of you who strive -- we strive to honor. I believe we are on a cusp of a forward movement for both our organization, a movement that honors our past without compromising our future.

When you move forward, it is usually always for something. But when -- the good news is that it is always towards something. This year the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary moved away from 100 years of old sisterhood, but took a gigantic leap towards a family-oriented organization.

(Applause)

NATIONAL PRESIDENT GUILFORD: We all know it's possible and it is a part of our heritage. I can't wait to see what comes next.

To every veteran in this room, thank you for your service to our country. You share a bond that one -- that no one -- that it is stronger than ever than most of you will be able to comprehend. This bond of military service can accomplish great things for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for the veterans everywhere, and the military community at large.

John, thank you for your support and friendship this year. It has been an honor serving aside you.

Brian, I wish you all the best. And, Keith, the same.

And, B. J., where are you? I wish you the best.

And all of you, may God bless you, bless us all in what you do and what you're going to do in the future. Thank you for all that you do and what you have done and what you continue to do.

And may God bless America. Thank you.

(Standing ovation)

*ANNOUNCEMENT - NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY WINNERS AND
SILENT AUCTION RESULTS LYNN ROLF, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. Moving right along. We have to get a report on the National Buddy Poppy contest winners and, of course, our silent auction.

So at this time, I'm calling forth Lynn Rolf, the Programs Director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY LYNN ROLF

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Thank you, Chief.

How about that rally last night, Comrades?

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: The Buddy Poppy is, without a question, one of the most recognizable symbols around the world. To VFW members, it symbolizes commemoration of a war debt and our service to living veterans. And for decades, the VFW members have distributed the beloved Buddy Poppy to millions of Americans every year.

Today we recognize those who have taken the Buddy Poppies to another level. Posts use Buddy Poppies in the creation of inspirational and exceptional works of arts and displays that you hopefully took a moment to view in the exhibit hall.

The entries were judged by the National VFW Programs Committee members: Robert Graser; Joe Rigsby; as well as William Beams, Junior; and the 2015-2016 Auxiliary Veterans and Family Support Ambassador, Laurie Dale; and this year's Programs Committee Ambassador, 2016-2017, Jeanette Garcia.

The displays were judged on effectiveness, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, and beauty, and the numbers of poppies used.

This year's Category 1 for public promotion of a Poppy campaign, I will now announce the winners.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Honorable mention goes to Factory City Post 8078 and its auxiliary, Kewanee, Illinois.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Third place: Perris Valley Post 888, Perris, California.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Second place: Buckhead Ridge Post 9528 and its auxiliary, Okeechobee, Florida.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: And this first place: VFW Auxiliary, the Kyle/Buda Post 12058 -- 12058, Kyle, Texas.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Category 2 is used for poppies in memorial or inspirational display.

Honorable mention goes to the VFW Auxiliary to the Leon Williams Post 4346, Toccoa, Georgia.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Third place: VFW Auxiliary, the T-Sergeant Walter C. Fulda Post 3433, Lansing, South Carolina.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Second place: Hugo Matejcek Post 3723 and Auxiliary, Owatonna, Minnesota.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: First place: VFW Auxiliary to the Billy Simpson Post No. 470, Erie, Pennsylvania.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Category 3 is for artistic or decorative use of the poppies.

Honorable mention goes to Randolph County Post 2698 and Auxiliary, Sparta, Illinois.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Third place: Bob Milby Post 6450, Chester, West Virginia.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Second place: West Street St. Charles Post 3750, Luling, Louisiana.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: First place: West Brazos Post 8551 and its auxiliary in Sweeney, Texas.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: The Directors Award is given to the Buddy Poppy display that, in the judge's opinion, is it most creatively and effectively represents the intent of the Buddy Poppy program.

This year's recipients of the Directors Award in Category 1 goes to Superstition Mountain Post 9399 and its Auxiliary from Apache Junction, Arizona.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Category 2, the Daisy Mountain Area Post 12031 from Anthem, Arizona.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: This year marks the 16th consecutive silent auction we've had at the convention. This year all departments have donated items, many reflective in their home states and commonwealths. The purpose of this auction is to raise money for issues that are close to the heart of VFW members and its Auxiliary.

And this year's recipient will be the VFW National Home. I'm very proud to announce this year's auction garnered a total of more than \$6,016.00. I am pleased to present this check --

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: -- present this check to our Commander-in-Chief, Big John Biedrzycki.

(Applause)

COMRADE LYNN ROLF: Thank you, Comrades, and thanks for supporting the Buddy Poppy Program. And let's -- let's increase our support next year.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: It's a good program. It's always been a win-win situation. Why? Because it helps us remember; number two, it helps those that put them together; it helps us raise funds, and those funds directly go to the relief fund to help veterans. That's why that's a win-win situation. And we should be very proud of that program.

Thank you for your hard work and your efforts and the displays were just tremendous this year.

And also to the department commanders who made those nice donations, you had a lot of people haggling at the last second to get their bids in on those wonderful prizes that you brought from your area of the country. So they really appreciated that. Thank you.

*INTRODUCTION OF SUPREME COMMANDER DONALD LYNCH,
MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Is the Supreme Commander in the room?

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, you better get going here. We're waiting for you.

A trip to almost any VA hospital will reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing comfort and laughs to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to keeping them smiling in beds of white is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest will -- well, he was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at the organization's 96th Supreme Scratch in Pittsburgh last year. And I don't know why we let him in Pittsburgh, but I guess we did.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Donald Lynch from the great state of Wisconsin.

(Applause)

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: Good morning.

(Good morning)

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Duffy, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief -- I always want to say Mark, but it's Keith -- ongoing joke we have between each other -- past Chiefs, Comrades, and guests, I am Donald Lynch, Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the great state of Wisconsin.

It has been an honor and a privilege serving as the Supreme Commander this past year. As you know, our work is hospital. It is to keep the veterans smiling in beds of white. As long as there is a veteran in a hospital, there will be a Cootie to help.

This year I started in Pittsburgh with Caring and Sharing, where we took 300 veterans out on a boat. We had food with them. We got to sit down and talk with them. We got to dance with them. We had a great time.

After that, I went out to Washington, DC, where we laid over 250 wreathes at the tomb of the unknown soldier. We are there to commemorate and to honor those that gave the ultimate sacrifice, their lives, all of our brothers and sisters, and we are there for them.

As you know, Commander Biedrzycki, you've had a great year. I thank you for that. But all your efforts weren't just towards the VFW. I'm proud to say that Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki is part of Dirty Gertie Pup Tent –

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Pup Tent 29.

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: Pup Tent 29 out of Pennsylvania one of the top Pup Tents in the nation. Thank you for all your hard work.

After going to Pittsburgh and after going out to DC, one of the most dear things to my heart is our VFW National Home for Children. I went out there for Christmas. I was there for Halloween. I'm there every year. I love it.

And this year I'd like to thank – take the time to especially thank past Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller for getting me involved and paving the way for the Military Order of the Cootie to possibly have an MOC -- MOC home for the first time at the National Home for Children. Chief Mueller, thank you very much.

(Applause)

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: The Military Order of the Cootie was started September 17th, 1920. As I stated before, our mission is helping veterans in a hospital and around the world. I am proud to announce this year the MOC and MOCA have donated over \$8.1 million in hospital work.

(Applause)

SUPREME COMMANDER LYNCH: It is their undying love for the veterans in our country that help us to accomplish this great goal. For those of you who have not taken those backward steps and accepted that challenge, I invite you to become a member of this great organization in helping our hospitalized brothers and sisters.

As you know, nobody does more for veterans than the VFW, and nobody does more for hospitalized veterans than the MOC. Thank you very much. I salute you.

(Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: At this time, I'd like to introduce the past Commanders-in-Chiefs. The following past Commander-in-Chiefs who are attending this convention:

1976-1977 R. D. "Bulldog" Smith from Georgia.

1984-85, the first Vietnam veteran from North Carolina, Billy Ray Cameron.

1985-'86, John Staum from Minnesota. And
I believe John was not able to make it finally.

1988-'89 Larry Rivers from Louisiana.

1989-1990, Wally Hogan from Wisconsin.

1991-'92 Bob Wallace from New Jersey.

1992-'93, Jack Carney from Florida.

1993-'94, George Cramer, Illinois.

1994-'95, "Gunner" Kent from Arizona.

1995-'96, Paul Spera, Massachusetts.

1996-'97, Jim Nier from Texas.

1999-2000, John Smart, Virginia.

2000-2001, John Gwizdak, Georgia.

2003-2004, Ed Banas, Connecticut.

2004-2005, John Furgess, Tennessee.

2005-2006, Jim Mueller, Missouri.

2006-2007, Gary Kurpius, Alaska.

2007-2008, George Lisicki, New Jersey.

2008-2009, Glen Gardner, Texas.

2009-2010, Tommy Tradewell, Wisconsin.

2011-2012, Rich DeNoyer, Massachusetts.

Hell, I served 2012-2013, me, John Hamilton, Florida.

2013-2014, Bill Thien, Indiana.

2014-2015, John Stroud, Nevada.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you for your service. Let's give them one more -- all collectively a round of applause.
(Applause)

NOMINEES FOR NATIONAL HOME BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Okay. At this time nominations for the National Home trustees. I will now read the nominations for the National Home Board of Trustees. There are six nominations for District 6 for 20-- 2016-2022 representing Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

They are:

Sissy Borel has been a VFW National Home Life Member since May, 2005. She is endorsed by the Auxiliary to the VFW Department of Louisiana.

Secondly, Deborah Halter has been a VFW National Home Life Member since November of 2011. She is endorsed by the Department of Missouri.

Anna McKeehan has been a VFW National Home Life Member since June, 2009. She is endorsed by the Auxiliary to the VFW Department of Tennessee.

Larry A. Raymond has been a VFW National Home Life Member since September, 2011. He is endorsed by the Department of Louisiana.

Virginia Smiley has been a VFW National Home Life Member since April, 2001. She is endorsed by the VFW Department of Kentucky and its Auxiliary.

Rebecca Strauss has been a VFW National Home Life Member since August 8th, 1989. She is endorsed by the Auxiliary to the Department of -- VFW Department of Missouri.

There are four generations for District 10. The 2016-2022 representing Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

They are:

Betty Cantrell, Washington, has been a VFW National Home Life Member since May, 1968. She is endorsed by the Auxiliary to the VFW Department of Texas.

Ron Gimondo has been a VFW National Home Life Member since October, 2008. He is endorsed by the VFW Department of Oklahoma.

Sylvia Sanchez has been a VFW National Home Life Member since August, 2011. She is endorsed by the VFW Department of Texas.

Shirley Frias has been a VFW National Home Life Member since September, 2000. She is endorsed by the Auxiliary to the VFW, Department of New Mexico.

Those are nominations for the National Home Board.

*PAST NATIONAL CHAPLAIN THEODORE BOWERS PRESENTS
LEGION OF HONOR BRONZE MEDALLION FROM CHAPEL OF FOUR
CHAPLAINS TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN BIEDRZYCKI*

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Eddy Bowers, we ask him to please come forward. He has a presentation to make at this time to the Chief.

PAST NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: On January 23rd, 1943, the USAT Dorchester, carrying troops, left New York Harbor bound for Greenland.

Just after midnight on February 3rd, an enemy submarine fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, destroying the electrical supply and releasing clouds of steam and ammonia gas. Many onboard died instantly. Some were trapped below deck.

The testimony of survivors tell us the sole order and fragment of hope, during this chaos, came from four Chaplains who calmly guided men to their boat stations. They opened a storage locker and distributed jackets. When the supply of life jackets was exhausted, the four chaplains either gave away or forced upon other young men their own life jackets.

As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains gathered together and led the men around them in prayer and a hymn. They linked their arms together in brotherhood, and with their heads bowed in prayer, they sank beneath the waves. It was a historic act. It was especially significant because of the identity

of the four young men: Two Protestant ministers, a Catholic priest, and a Jewish rabbi.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia serves the memory of these brave men and carries their message of inner faith, cooperation, and selfless service to every part of our country.

To recognize and encourage acts of volunteerism, brotherhood, and sacrifice among Americans of every age and station in life, the Chapel established the Legion of Honor program.

The Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award is given in recognition of exceptional selfless service on the part of an individual which contributes to the well-being of his or her community, to the well-being in the national and world affairs, and to a spirit of inner faith and cooperation.

It is my honor to present the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion Award to our Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, John A. Biedrzycki, Junior.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Wow, I accept that award not just as your Commander-in-Chief, but for all of you who serve every day to try to make a difference in the world. That was the spirit of the four chaplains. And I hope that you too will live those lives of stainless integrity and shall always reflect honor upon the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our mission of the service to others. Thank you.

PRESENTATION TO SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BRIAN DUFFY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And now we have a presentation

--

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We have a presentation to Commander-in-Chief-to-be elect. How about that? Mr. Duffy.

Jim Chancellor, are you here? Come on forward.

COMRADE JIM CHANCELLOR: Good morning, Comrades. Thank you very much for allowing me to share this story with you for a couple of minutes.

It was 32 years ago today, or this month, that I was with you in Chicago. And in Chicago, I was a young 36-year-old Vietnam veteran that was urging our great organization to take down any roadblocks or anything that would stop the young veterans from Vietnam from becoming VFW members.

It was also a time that we passed the torch from one generation of heroes to the next.

Most importantly, I was in Chicago to present a ring to Billy Ray Cameron. And as you know, Billy Ray was the first Vietnam veteran to hold the Post as National Commander.

I knew back then, 32 years ago, as I know today, that we need to continue to reach and invite and encourage all young eligible veterans to join our great organization that I am so proud to be a part of.

Several years later in presenting a ring to Bob Wallace, I quoted Douglas MacArthur. And Douglas MacArthur said, "Old soldiers never die. They just simply fade away."

And I reminded us all that it was very true, that their karma and their spirit live within us in this great organization.

I then talked to you about a poem that was written back in World War I by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. It is a very famous poem. And it talks about all veterans being the same. It doesn't matter where or when you served this great country, all of our efforts, our sacrifice, and our commitment and our courage, it remained the same no matter where you were.

The poem goes like this:

(As read)

"To you with failing hands, I
throw the torch, be it yours to hold high.
If ye break faith with those that died, we
shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders
field."

Now, let me take just a minute and tell you about that torch. That torch indeed has been passed from generation to generation, from one hero to the next. From Flanders fields, where the poppies grow, it was passed on to the beaches of Normandy; from the beaches of Normandy, it went to Osan, Korea; and along with that torch, went the fire and the zest and the love of country that has kept us free.

From Osan, Korea, it went to the jungles of Vietnam; from Vietnam to the deserts of Kuwait and Iraq and onto the mountains of Afghanistan.

Our commitment to America was always strong. And it must remain strong today because we are the protectors and the guardians of this great place we call home.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about the ring before we make the presentation. Originally the American Veterans Collection had rings for our World War II people, our Korean veterans, and the Vietnam veterans. But then came more wars, more fighting, more tales of courage and sacrifice.

Our efforts to remain free became global and more complicated. So the Patriot Ring was born. This ring is worn by anyone -- men, women, anyone serving our country today that keeps the fight alive that keeps us free.

Commander Duffy is a true patriot. He has served this country and our organization well, having served in the Air Force as a jet mechanic and a flight engineer in Grenada, Panama, and during Desert Storm and Shield.

Amongst his military decorations are the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Southwest Asia Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, and he earned the Air Medal for his services in Desert Storm.

I am both honored and pleased to present this beautiful Patriot Ring to the next generation of leadership to this wonderful and great organization I am so proud of, the VFW.

Commander?

(Applause)

REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: Thank you. And on behalf of all the Desert Storm veterans, I wear it proudly. Thank you.

(Applause)

*MOTION TO SUBMIT PROCEEDINGS OF 117TH NATIONAL
CONVENTION TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE*

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Chief, thank you.

I want to make a motion at this time. I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 117th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a house document in accordance with Public Law 620 of the 90th Congress, approved October 2nd, 1968, and entitled -- as Title 44 United States Code, Section 1332. And I so move.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Do we have a second?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HARMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I'll second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: The Junior Vice Commander, Keith Harman, seconds that motion.

A motion on the floor to submit the proceedings to Congress. Question being called for. All those in favor say "aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "no"?

Be it so ordered.

Having no further responsibility, it's now my pleasure to dismiss the Committee on General Resolutions. As always, a job well done by you, Chairman George Lisicki, Vice Chairman Richard Eubank, past Chief Moon, past Chief Thien, and the good members of your committee.

And my thanks to all the chairmen, the vice chairmen, and to all of the members of each committee for your time and your efforts.

And now go back and sell it at home. Make sure they know that we conducted the business for veterans at this convention.

Other than the nomination and election and installation of officers, is there any other business to come before this convention? Any other business? Any other business?

Hearing none, I will call upon the adjutant general for any announcements he may have.

CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: You may recall last year we changed the structure of the individual ceremony and parades. This year we'll have the same procedure. The Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief will maintain the traditional parade following a presentation of placing their caps, pins, and badges.

The Quartermaster General, Chaplain, Judge Advocate General, and the Surgeon General will share in one collective ceremony parade at the conclusion of the presentation and placing of the cap, pin, and badge of the Surgeon General and his remarks.

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF 2016-2017 NATIONAL OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We will now proceed with the nomination and election of the 2016 and 2017 national officers. And I want to thank the adjutant general for not calling me short, even though I can't see over the bootlaces.

Here we go –

Yes?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Point of order.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I make a motion that where there's no opposition to an office, that the adjutant be directed to cast one ballot.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: There's been a motion made that where there's no opposition, the adjutant be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot. Do we have a second?

COMRADE FRITZ MIHELICIC: Commander-in-Chief, Fritz Mihelcic, I second.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Fritz Mihelcic seconds that motion. You've heard the motion. Question being called for. All those in favor say "aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Opposed, "no"?

Be it so ordered.

NOMINATION FOR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We'll now proceed with the nomination and election of our officers. I will open the nominations for the Office of Commander-in-Chief.

Are there any nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Please step to the mic.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, delegates to this convention, I'm John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia, and also a past Commander-in-Chief.

I rise to place a nomination, an individual from the Southern Conference who is a proven leader, Bernard J. Brian Duffy was born in Ireland and immigrated to the United States with his parents at the ripe old age of one.

He would fully embrace his new country by serving in the United States Air Force, first as a jet engineer mechanic on the F-4 Phantom fighter aircraft, and later as a flight engineer aboard the C-141 Starlifter transport aircraft. It was as a crew dog.

He earned his VFW eligibility by supporting operations in Grenada, Panama, and Saudi Arabia, where he would receive the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and Southwest Asia Service Medal.

Upon his return from Grenada, he first joined VFW Post 6590 in Cookstown, New Jersey. Then after his honorable discharge from the military, he transferred it to Garden City Post 120 in New York, then finally to VFW Post 1170 in Middletown, Kentucky.

After being hired by UPS as a flight engineer instructor, he would rise through the UPS ranks until he retired in 2014 as assistant chief pilot. Having flown worldwide as an instructor check captain on the Boeing 757 and Boeing 767 aircraft.

Brian was elected VFW Department Commander in the year 2006 and has achieved All-American status at post, district, and department levels. But coming from the Bluegrass state, there's nothing greater than to be a Triple Crown winner.

He is a Gold Legacy Life member and a member of the VFW National Home for Children and Military Order of the Cootie.

Comrades, I am a proud Vietnam veteran who is extremely proud and honored to place a nomination the first Desert Storm/Desert Shield veteran to ascend to the high office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I place a nomination for Commander-in-Chief Bernard J. Brian Duffy, and we seek your support.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: And now for a second?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I'm Jack Carney, a delegate from Post 4643, Department of Florida, and also a past Commander-in-Chief.

As a proud Korean veteran, I consider it an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to second the nomination of Brian Duffy to become the next Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

His slogan for the year is "Clear the Way." Those who know him know he is not afraid to rock the boat. He's not afraid to make the hard decisions and certainly the right decisions.

As the first Gulf War veteran to be nominated to lead our great organization, I can personally attest to Brian's full commitment to the VFW.

To our past that will be honored and embraced, and to the future there is guaranteed to be bright because of his passion and commitment to better serve our nation's veterans, her service members, and all of their families.

He is big on volunteerism, and his Honor Flight activities has been recognized many times in the Department of Kentucky, the Aviation Hall of Fame, the Kentucky Derby Festival, and the City of Louisville. And he is also the recipient of a Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

He and his wife of 30 years, Jean -- who, by the way, served three terms as the Auxiliary President to 1170 -- still reside in Louisville and have two adult children, Tara and Andrew.

It is indeed a privilege and an honor to second the nomination of Brian J. Duffy for Commander-in-Chief.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

Hearing none, I now wait for the motion -- there won't be one. We don't need them. That's right, we don't need the motion now because we had a motion.

I instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for Brian Duffy for Commander-in-Chief.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: At this time, I cast one unanimous ballot -- pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Brian J. Duffy for Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 2016-2017.

(Standing ovation)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: All states line up, please. March with the Commander-in-Chief-Elect. Make a hole and make it wide, please.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you and your lovely bride around the hall as the next and the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. My privilege here, sir.

Mr. Maestro, the United States Air Force.

(Whereupon, a ceremonial parade was held.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades, I present to you the Commander-in-Chief-Elect Brian Duffy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Thank you, Chief. Thank you, Comrades. Thank you. Thanks.

As Big John can attest to and every one of the past Commander-in-Chiefs can attest to, what an incredible honor, what an incredible journey, what an incredible opportunity to continue to serve this great organization as your Commander-in-Chief.

I'll have more to say during my speech here once we have the other officers in place. But for now, a heartfelt thank you, Comrades.

(Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I'll now open the nomination -- nominations for the Office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Are there any nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

COMRADE ROGER FRYE: I'm Roger Frye, post delegate, 8487, Department of Ohio, past Department Commander, Big Ten chairman in the National Council.

It's a great honor and pleasure to be able to make this nomination today.

Keith Harman served in Vietnam from March 17th, 1969, through November, 1969. He was a member of the Second Squadron, 17th Cav, 101st Airborne Division. He served as a crew chief and a door gunner on a Huey helicopter.

He worked 24 years for Fruehauf Trailer in Delphos. In July of 1991, he worked as a Veterans Service Officer for Van Wert County in Ohio and retired in October, 2011.

Harman joined his post, 3035, in Delphos in 1983. He served as Post Commander, Quartermaster, and Service Officer. He was an All-American Commander and Quartermaster at this Post level. He was District 2 All-American Commander. He led the Department of Ohio as an All-American Commander in 2004 and 2005.

Harman and his wife, Mary Lou, were married September the 23rd, 1967. They have a son and a daughter and five grandchildren. Ohio is very proud of Keith and what he has done for this great organization and what he will do in the future.

At this time, I nominate Ohio and a Big Ten candidate Keith Harman for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief 2016-2017. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Any seconding for the nomination?

On the floor, Chief recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CHRIS HAYNES: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Chris Haynes, delegate Post 7670, past Department Commander.

I'm privileged to second the nomination on behalf of the 66,000 members of the Department of Ohio for Keith Harman for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade Haynes.

Are there any other seconds?

Not hearing any, are there any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

Hearing none, I instruct the adjutant -- I, first of all, close the nominations. And I instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for Keith Harman from the Buckeye state of Ohio as the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: We have a motion to second the nominations be closed -- excuse me, the nominations are closed. Excuse me.

Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, Adjutant General, excuse me, pursuant the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Keith E. Harman for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2016-2017.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you, Comrade Adjutant. We're going to have his hat placed by his wife, Mary Lou, and the dawning of the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief's pin.

(Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-Elect Keith Harman, it is an honor for the National Sergeants to escort you and your lovely bride around this hall.

Mr. Maestro, the United States Army.

(Whereupon, a ceremonial parade was held.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades, you've now elected Keith Harman as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, and I'd like to ask him if he'd like to say a few words. Here he is, the new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

REMARKS BY SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HARMAN

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT HARMAN: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. What a humbling experience this is for me to have served as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief and, again, giving me the privilege to serve as your Senior Vice Commander.

I want to thank John Biedrzycki for his leadership and for this year; but, more importantly, for his friendship. We'll remain friends for the rest of our lives.

Brian Duffy has cleared the way for his Irish brigade. And to you, Brian, I certainly pledge my sincere support and will do whatever that I can do to assist you.

This is just a thrill of my life. So thank you. Thank you, Comrades.
(Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I will now open the nomination for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Are there any nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

Past Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LISICKI: Commander-in-Chief, delegates to the 117th Convention, George Lisicki, delegate, VFW Post 2314, Carteret, New Jersey, past Commander-in-Chief.

It gives me great honor and privilege to place a nomination in the name of B. J. Lawrence for high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief 2016-2017.

B. J. served as a proud member of the Veterans Forever Serving team; during my tenure as Commander-in-Chief in 2007-2008, as the State Commander of the Department of New Mexico. B. J. earned his eligibility to join our great organization by being awarded a Korean Defense Service Medal for serving in the United States Army.

B. J.'s accomplishments speak for themselves. At the completion of his military service, B. J. began his career in law enforcement as a police officer and later as an undercover narcotics agent.

B. J. is currently self-employed as a private investor and owner of Lawrence Investigations in New Mexico.

B. J. is just not a member of this organization; he has been a leader in this organization. He has not just been a leader in this organization; he has been an accomplished leader in this organization.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is an organization that gets its strength through numbers, and B. J. has been instrumental in promoting growth in our organization.

B. J. has led this organization by example, which is evident by his accomplishments as a leader: Two-time All-American Post Commander, two-

time Captain of his All-State team, All-American District Commander, All-State District Commander, and All-American State Commander. My comrades, B. J. is a Triple Crown Award recipient.

He was a National Certified Recruiter in 2007 to 2010; Western Conference Chairman in 2008-2009; National Council Member, District 15, 2009 to 2011. And also served on the National Appeals Committee and Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Committee.

B. J. has been a Life Member of our organization for over 11 years, and he has made a lifetime commitment to our organization by becoming a Legacy Gold Life Member in 2008.

I am proud and honored to place a nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief 2016-2017, a member of my Veterans Forever Serving team, from the great Department of New Mexico, B. J. Lawrence.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: A second for the nomination?

COMRADE GIL HERNANDEZ: Comrade Commander, I'm Gil Hernandez, a delegate from Elko, Nevada, Post 2350, which I've been a member for 45 years, a National Council Member, and a past Department Commander of Nevada.

I'm proud to second the nomination today for B. J. Lawrence for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. I've known B. J. for 13 years when he started in the Junior Vice Department chairs. We did both did that at about the same time. That was in 2007-2008.

He was a caring commander who tried to help all veterans and their families in New Mexico. The VFW members and Auxiliary cared about him so much, they made sure he would be All-American State Commander, as well as the District and Post level, making him a Triple Crown Award recipient.

He has also served on numerous national and state positions. Our Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki said one of us would be Commander-in-Chief of our great organization in the future. Well, I knew it wouldn't be me. But B. J. stepped up and made a point to start campaigning early for the Commander-in-Chief of our great organization.

I was asked to be on his campaign committee, and I was honored to be able to help B. J. in any way to get him to where we are now.

As you know, it's not easy to run for this high office. It takes a lot of time and, of course, money. But B. J. was determined and held fundraisers, visited departments to let them know he was dedicated to work his way up to someday becoming the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of our fine organization.

There were many challenges, but B. J. stood fast and was determined to keep his head up high and continued to work for the betterment of our organization, especially when he had so many supporters in the VFW and Auxiliary.

He will be a great team player working with the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander of our organization and has the total support of his family.

The younger veteran generation wants to learn how and what to do in the VFW. It's our job to teach them these important things in our organization. And B. J. is the one to lead them to learn what to do and how to accomplish their job. And that's all they're asking for.

His challenge credo says it all: "Shooting for the Future in 2016."

I'm going to leave you with something my mom always told me and asked me to consider when I was ever around other people, and that's what I would ask you to do when you see your fellow brothers and sisters out here that want help.

In closing, I would ask you to ignore most of what people say and instead watch what they do.

Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Is there a second? Past Commander-in-Chief Banas.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, I am Edward Banas, Senior, a delegate to the – to this convention, past Commander-in-Chief and a member of VFW Post 10004 in the Department of Connecticut.

My purpose here at our 117th National Convention is to, again, second the nomination of Comrade Vincent "B. J." Lawrence from the Department of New Mexico for the office of National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the soon-to-be ensuing year of 2016-2017.

An Army veteran serving in Korea, he returned home to continue his service to country and community as a police officer and a dedicated member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He exemplifies the image that is expected from our membership.

Knowing Comrade Lawrence for several years, it is easy to say that he lives by a very, very simple rule: Never above you, never beneath you, but always your equal.

His hand is always out to say hello. And I would ask each of you to extend yours to his in passing.

He will follow in the footsteps of 109 past commander-in-chiefs. I assure sure you that he will project the proper image of his office while traveling throughout these United States and with our missions overseas. He understands that his mission is for the good and betterment of the whole.

Comrade Lawrence, I wish you well and ask each of you to support him in his quest to do the people's work.

I am proud to second the nomination of Vincent "B. J." Lawrence for the high and honorable office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Are there any other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Any other nominations?

(No)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I – thank you. I now declare the nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief closed, and instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for B. J. Lawrence for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: John Hamilton, Adjutant. I cast one unanimous ballot for B. J. Lawrence, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, 2016-2017.

(Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Captain, right here, please.

Comrade Junior Vice Commander-Elect to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, it's a privilege for the National Sergeants to escort you and your lovely bride, Mary -- I wouldn't say what the guy did next to you, but that's okay. That was comeback -- around this hall.

Mr. Maestro, the United States Army.

(Whereupon, a ceremonial parade was held.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades, I now present to you the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect, B. J. Lawrence.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT LAWRENCE

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT LAWRENCE: Wow. I knew we had the greatest organization in the world, but that parade just set me back. Comrades, I -- I will never know how to thank you. You humble me with your support. You humble me with your guidance and your mentorship.

It is certainly the dream of my life to be able to be put in a position before you to do the work of this great organization, to serve you and to serve our veterans and families.

I'd like to thank my wife, Mary, for standing beside me, guiding me. I definitely want to thank Commander-in-Chief Biedrzycki, Duffy, and Harman. I'm looking forward to being a part of the Duffy and Harman team.

But Comrades, I will tell you not only should we be proud of them as leaders, but they've been great mentors over the last few years for me. And certainly it will be a privilege to serve on this team. And certainly it'll be a privilege to continue serving you.

Thank you for all your support. I look forward to seeing you-all tonight.

God bless each and every one of you, and God bless our great United States of America.

(Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I now open the nominations for the office of Quartermaster General. Are there any nominations for Quartermaster General?

Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier from Texas.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

Jim Nier, past Commander-in-Chief, delegate, Post 8919, Texas.

Comrades, this morning I have the high honor and distinct privilege of placing a nomination for the position of Quartermaster General, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, in the name of the comrade currently serving as Assistant Quartermaster General.

Comrade Debra Anderson was appointed to her position in August, 2015. For the past 11 months, she has been assisting the Quartermaster General and acting as Chief of Staff for his areas of responsibility, which include finance and insurance, properties, legal, human resources, information technology, emblem and supply, dues processing, and member benefits.

She has served with distinction and has exhibited the confidence and expertise necessary to assume the myriad of duties of the Quartermaster General.

Most importantly, she has earned the respect and the trust of her fellow employees and the general membership.

Prior to her appointment as Assistant Quartermaster General, she was the director of human resources and investments coordinator from 2009 to 2015.

She attended the University of Missouri-Columbia on an ROTC scholarship. She was an ROTC Army Cadet Battalion Commander and graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics in 1980.

Upon graduation, she was commissioned as an AG (Human Resources) Second Lieutenant. Her military assignments included Nuremberg/Furth, Germany; Fort Ben Harrison, Indiana; Fort Riley, Kansas; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and Fort McPherson, Georgia.

She served as a maintenance company commander, First Armored Division, and as a Garrison inspector general. She earned her eligibility for the VFW during Desert Storm/Desert Shield having been deployed with the 1st Infantry Division to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait in 1990.

She is a graduate of the Army's Combined Armed Services Staff School and the Command and General Staff College. Her awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, two Meritorious Medals, four Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, the Southeast Asia Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, and Parachutist Badge.

She left the Army as a major in 1993 and held a variety of business positions from 1993 to 2007. She joined VFW Post 7356 in Parkville, Missouri, in 2006 where she is a Gold Legacy Life Member and a Life Member of the VFW Auxiliary. She was an All-American Post Commander there in 2010.

In addition to her bachelor's degree in economics, she also has a master's degree in systems management from the University of Southern California, which she received in 1989 while on active duty.

She and her husband Stephen, US Army retired, reside in Kansas City, Missouri.

I think that we would all agree that with the challenges we face in the VFW, both today and tomorrow, it is imperative that we have a quartermaster general that is ready to meet those challenges and turn them into opportunities.

Debra Anderson is ready. Her passion for the success of our organization, her vision for the future, her personal attributes of loyalty and impeccable integrity, along with a professional on-the-job expertise and exceptional public-speaking ability, make her uniquely qualified for this position.

Simply put, she is the woman for the job. By electing her to this high office as the first female quartermaster general since we were founded 117 years ago, we will show that the VFW is on a progressive path for the future.

With that, Comrades, it is with much personal pride that I proudly place a nomination in the name of Comrade Debra Anderson, Post 7356, Parkville, Missouri, for the position of Quartermaster General Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for fiscal year 2016-2017. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: For a second to that nomination, Past Chief Jim Mueller.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I'm Jim Mueller, Past Commander-in-Chief, delegate of Post 5077, Missouri.

I am pleased and honored to second the nomination of Debra Anderson, an individual who has served not only her country in Southwest Asia in the United States Army, but has served this great organization of ours, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for the past nine years.

Debra has a strong work ethic, is honest and trustworthy, and I trust Debra to guide this great organization of ours to the best of her ability.

It is with honor and my pleasure I second the nomination of Debra Anderson for the high office of Quartermaster General for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year 2016-2017. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Any other nominations for Quartermaster General?

I now declare the nominations closed, and I instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for Debra Anderson for Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, Adjutant General. Pursuant to the power and authority vested to me, I cast one

unanimous ballot for Debra Anderson for Quartermaster General of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the 2016-2017 year.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: Good morning.
(Morning)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: Well, here we are. Wow. Thank you all so very much. Thank you for electing me as your National Quartermaster General. I'm truly honored. I'm very excited to be here. And I promise I will work hard to live up to your expectations for me in this new role.

This has been quite a journey, and so I'm going to take a few more minutes than the previous speakers because this is -- I'm so excited and I have so many people I want to thank.

So let me start with my parents, Wayne and Carla Anderson, who came out for this event. They have, over all these years, set a perfect example for me. They have been such good role models. They have so much excitement for life and for the things that they're involved in. And that has been passed on to me. When I get into something, I give it my all. And that comes from my parents.

They taught me good values, the benefit of hard work, and they had unlimited -- they have unlimited confidence in my abilities, which gives me the ability to come up here and speak to our members. Always supporting, always encouraging, and I couldn't have asked for more. So thank you to my parents, Wayne and Carla Anderson.

(Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: I need to thank my husband, Steve Bourque. You don't see him a lot of these events, but we have been married 30 years. He's always behind the scenes. He cares deeply about what we're doing at the VFW. And he is here this morning, my husband, Steve.

(Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: Thank you. Those of you who have heard me speak before -- and I've been at a number of state conventions as well as some conference conventions -- know that I talk about the founding of the VFW. Because I think our founders were really insightful and really knew what they were doing when they were putting the organization together.

There were a number of groups around the country in 1899 that were forming to support Spanish American War veterans and Philippine American War veterans. And it was 1913-1914 they came together and they said, "Who are we and what are we all about?"

And what we're all about is anyone in the military who has served their country in a foreign war and being there for them as their advocate. So we

weren't specific to a war. We weren't Civil War. We weren't Spanish American War. We were going to go on into eternity.

And we had talked earlier about passing the torch. And we're seeing this transition happening in the VFW, where we -- we recognize and appreciate all of our comrades, but we also need to mentor the younger ones and we need to be prepared to pass that torch.

And so I am so thrilled that my nephew, Sean Harper, Second Lieutenant Marine Corps Officer, is here today to help with that ceremony to symbolize and to represent the tremendous quality we have in our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marine; and what we can look forward to, in terms of taking our places in the future, as we -- as we bring them through the military and bring them through the Veterans of Foreign Wars. So I am thrilled that John is here today to help with this.

(Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: I have three wonderful sisters, one of them is here today, Rosie Anderson Harper, and she is the mother of Sean and her husband is here as well. And I'm pleased to have them. So thank you.

I also -- okay. So this campaign started several months ago. And I am not a marketing wizard, but if you saw my campaign, you saw fliers, you saw a Web site, you saw a Facebook group, you saw business cards. There was all this stuff out there with my picture on it.

And I have a stepdaughter, Stephanie Bourque-Smith, who is here today, and she is my -- my Web site guru, my campaign manager. She put all that stuff out there. And so I appreciate it so much. And she's here with my three wonderful grandkids: Kayla, Maddie, and Ellie; and her wonderful husband, Scott. So thank you all for being here today. I appreciate it.

(Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: And then within the VFW, I've had so many mentors and supporters, and especially the past quartermaster generals. I have worked with Joe Ridgley and Bob Greene and Larry Maher. And they have all set -- each set a wonderful example. And they've advised me and coached me and taught me how to do this.

And I really appreciate their support, in particular Larry Maher, who is retiring at this convention. And I expect I'll continue to call on him. But they -- they have been just wonderful mentors for me.

Also, my VFW Post 7356 in Parkville. I'm also very involved in the Rotary. So I want to shout out to the Plaza Rotary Club. Because those two groups really keep you involved in the community and they give you opportunities for leadership, and they have been wonderful.

And you, my Comrades, you -- you have done amazing things. You knew I needed to run before I knew I needed to run. And so by supporting me and encouraging me. And then when I couldn't be at state conventions, talking to

people about me, giving me your support, giving me your advice, your encouragement. You have been amazing.

And as you march around the room, I see so many familiar faces. I just feel like I have met and touched so many of you this year, and you've done it. And I appreciate what you do for our veterans, what you have done for me, and the confidence and support that you've given me.

Finally, I do want to recognize there's some historical significance here. I'm not only the first woman in this position, I'm the first Desert Storm veteran in this position. And I don't take that lightly, a 117-year --

(Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT ANDERSON: -- tradition of this great organization. But you didn't elect me because I'm a woman but because you believe in me. And, again, I want to thank you for your confidence.

I'm very excited to be part of this new leadership team. I have enjoyed working with Commanders Stroud and Biedrzycki, and I learned a lot from them. And now we move forward with Brian Duffy, Keith Harman, B. J. Lawrence, and Bob Wallace will also be part of that team.

I just -- I think this is such a great group to work with. I think we work well together. We have the right team to be steering this big ship called the VFW into the future, into the right direction.

I look forward to this coming year. I look forward to serving you as your Quartermaster General. And I thank you, once again, for this huge honor. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: All right. We're going to continue right along. We're going to elect the other positions, then we'll have our final parade for all of them.

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I will now open the nomination for the office of Chaplain.

And, Comrade Duffy, I've got to give you the chair here.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Are there any nominations for Chaplain?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's me.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Oh.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: That's why I gave you the chair because I rise to nominate from Pennsylvania Reverend Peter R. Hook for National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

Peter served in the United States Army, drafted in '66, attended Infantry OCS, served with the First Infantry Division in Vietnam '67-'68. And, of course, he also -- besides the eligibility medals received, Bronze Star and two Air Medals.

He was ordained in 1978. He was chaplain of Baylor University Medical Center for six years in Texas. He's a church pastor, a church consultant, and a conference speaker. He's a faculty member of the Philadelphia Biblical University for 29 years. He's a national seminar instructor for Bible Ministries, and he makes his home in Yardley-Lower Makefield, Post 6393, where he's been the chaplain since 2009.

He served many times since 2010 as the Pennsylvania state chaplain, and he served as the Eastern states chaplain for the last -- since 2014. That says a lot about him -- he's a professional man who is certainly committed to his role in mentoring those and helping.

His personal pride and integrity is probably the greatest thing that I could say about this candidate. He is committed and he is committed to service. But the thing I like about Peter the most as a minister is he's not afraid to enter any situation. Peter reaches out and he asks the question why and who and what can he do -- what can he do to make the situation better. And he gets involved. And I certainly appreciate that in a man of the cloth.

So without further ado, I would like to complete my nomination for the Reverend Peter R. Hook. Yes, and I love his name. You know I kid him all the time, Peter R. Hook. And I like to call him -- instead of calling him Chaplain Hook, I always call him Captain Hook.

So I hope that you will support Pennsylvania's candidate, the Reverend Peter R. Hook, for National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: For purposes of a second?

PAST CHAPLAIN THEODORE BOWERS: Reverend Theodore Bowers, Post 8896, East Berlin, Pennsylvania, past National Chaplain.

It is my great privilege to second the nomination of Reverend Dr. Peter R. Hook for the high office of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2016-2017.

Reverend Hook has provided outstanding religious leadership to post and district and in the state of Pennsylvania. He also provided resources and leadership to the post and department chaplains throughout the Veterans of Foreign Wars through his Internet service.

He is a preacher, a teacher, lecturer, educator, and writer. Peter practices what he preaches and teaches. He actively recruits and trains new members for his post. I believe he will continue to elevate the office of National Chaplain as he has done in the Department of Pennsylvania.

I, therefore, am very proud to nominate him to the high office of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Are there any other nominations for the office of National Chaplain? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

Hearing none, I instruct the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous vote for Peter Hook, National Chaplain, for the ensuing year.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, Adjutant General. Pursuant to the power and authority vested to me, I cast one unanimous ballot for Peter R. Hook for Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year, 2016-2017.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Comrades, you've elected Peter R. Hook as Chaplain. I'm going to have his lovely wife put his hat on.

Would you like to say a few words?

REMARKS BY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT PETER R. HOOK

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT HOOK: After teaching in a biblical university for 29 years, where I chaired a department that trained pastors, chaplains, and Christian workers, God brought me to the VFW where I am encouraging and helping to train VFW chaplains to care and serve for veterans and their families.

I am grateful for my wife, Caroline, who is the Auxiliary state musician for Pennsylvania, senior vice of her district, and president of her post's auxiliary.

A special thank you to my mentor and friend, past National Chaplain Ted Bowers. And the Department of Pennsylvania and my post, Post 6393 in Yardley, Pennsylvania, thank you for the freedom you give me to use my gifts.

Thank you to all of you for giving me the privilege of serving this year as your National Chaplain. Thank you.

(Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Moving right along. I will now open the nominations for the office of Judge Advocate General. Nominations?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Comrades, Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I'm proud to endorse the name of Tony Wolusky for the high office of Judge Advocate General. Tony is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and earned his eligibility in the VFW in the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Bosnia working as a judge advocate somehow.

I think that the cap of his career is the fact that he was a judge advocate at the Air Force Academy. They don't allow second class anybody to do anything like that.

I am proud to nominate Tony Wolusky for the high office of Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Commander-in-Chief recognizes Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE ALLAN STONE: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Allan Stone, Commander, Department of Colorado. I proudly second the nomination for Tony Wolusky for National Judge Advocate.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

Are there any other nominations for judge advocate? Any other nominations for judge advocate? Any other nominations for judge advocate general?

Hearing none, I now declare the nomination process for judge advocate general closed. And I instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for our new judge advocate general.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, Adjutant General. Pursuant to the power and authority vested to me, I cast one unanimous ballot for G. A. "Tony" Wolusky for Judge Advocate General for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2016-2017 year.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: He'll have his hat placed on.

(Applause)

REMARKS BY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT WOLUSKY

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT WOLUSKY: Hello everybody, and I just appreciate your trust and confidence in me.

And I also want to thank my phenomenal brothers and sisters in the Department of Colorado and the Auxiliary. You're tremendously motivating to me.

And I guess I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my father, George; and, of course, my mother, Eileen Mary Lanaham, will be quite impressed when I tell her that I'm a part of a group known as the Irish Brigade.

So, again, thanks. You know, I just -- I can't -- it's pretty overwhelming to be up here, as you can imagine, and to have your trust and confidence. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, I think we have one more: The office of Surgeon General. Are there any nominations for the office of Surgeon General?

COMRADE DUANE HERMANSON: Welcome, Comrades. Duane Hermanson, delegate from Post 4452, past State Commander for Minnesota.

It gives me great pleasure today to place a nomination: James "Doctor" Tuorila for the high office of Surgeon General.

James served the United States Army from 1973 to 1977, earning his VFW eligibility by serving in Korea. In recognition of his service, he received the National Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, and two Army Commendation Medals.

He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1995 at Post 428 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. He has served as Post Commander, All-American District Commander, and Department Surgeon.

This is his third time serving as National Surgeon General. He was named the VFW VA Health Care Employer of the Year in 2005.

James received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Bemidji State University, his master of arts degree from Wichita State University, and his PhD from Texas Tech University.

He retired from the St. Cloud VA Medical Center in 2006. He is currently a licensed psychologist. He is a member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Military Order of the Cootie, and the Korean War Veterans Association.

James and his wife, Diane, reside in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I am honored to place the nomination of James "Doctor" Tuorila as Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the pursuing year, 2016 and 2017.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We will now have a second to that nomination.

COMRADE CLINT TUORILA: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. My name is Clint Tuorila, delegate, Post 428, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Back in Minnesota, we are very proud of Jim "Doc" and all the work that's done for veterans, to advocate for you to really be a strong leader in veterans health, physical and mental health. What a great guy.

I know most of us are very proud to know him from Minnesota. I'm proud that he's my dad. And I second the nomination.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Are there any other nominations for Surgeon General? Any other nominations for the Office of Surgeon General? Any other nominations for the Office of the Surgeon General?

Hearing none, I now declare the office -- nominations for Surgeon General closed. And I instruct the adjutant to cast one unanimous ballot for Comrade Tuorila for Surgeon General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: Commander-in-Chief, John Hamilton, Adjutant General. And pursuant to the power and authority vested in me, I cast one unanimous ballot for James R. Tuorila for Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 2016-2017.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We will now have the placement of his cap.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT TUORILA

NATIONAL SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT TUORILA: This year marks the 30th year of working with combat veterans. Every day I go into my office and listen to veterans telling me how they are not hoping to die but are looking forward to the day they die so they can end the horrors of the war that they've lived with over their entire life.

I remember my co-therapist telling me many times when people ask him if he likes to travel and he says, "Yes, I go back to Vietnam every night."

I remember the first time in Texas Tech University when I was working on my internship and one of the former prisoners of war from the Pacific started to tell me about his experiences. And that started my 30-year love of American ex-prisoners of war and what they have gone through. In fact, last year, I was the first person of the United States awarded honorary membership of the ex-POWs without being a POW or a family member.

It is truly my honor and privilege, once again, to serve as your Surgeon General. I guarantee you that I will work heartfelt and in the best of my ability to serve your Commander-in-Chief and your Council Administration to keep them abreast of the issues that are affecting veterans today; the veterans that come in to see me that are not getting their access to care, that are not getting the benefits that they earned, are being turned down by the VA for claims for -- whether it's Agent Orange or toxic exposure or traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

This is what I'm here for. This is what I dedicated my life for. And I am humbled to, once again, serve as your Surgeon General. Thank you.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We'll now have the march for the officers. Please go down, get in line. This is the collective ceremonial parade for the Quartermaster General, the Chaplain, the Judge Advocate General, and the Surgeon General.

And I might also add in the room is the Buddy Poppy girl from the National Home, and she'll be traveling around visiting you. Please be generous in your accolades to her as she passes among you.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: All right. Let me see if I can get this right Comrade Quartermaster General, Surgeon General, Judge Advocate General, and National Chaplain -- I got it right -- it's an honor from the National Sergeants to escort you around this hall.

Mr. Maestro, a medley of all the military songs.

(Whereupon, a ceremonial parade was held.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I now call upon the Adjutant General to announce the newly-elected National Council of Administration members.

ADJUTANT GENERAL HAMILTON: They are Wally Watts -- all newly-elected Council members will please rise.

Wally Watts, Alaska

Michael Ferguson, Arizona

Earl Fulk, California

Bruce Dolan, Colorado

Stanley Fernandez, Hawaii

Richard Johnson, Idaho

Bobby Cox, Kansas

Arthur Widhalm, Montana

Gil Hernandez, Nevada

Kathie Schiebel, New Mexico

James Hapala, North Dakota

Bert Key, Oregon

Shawn Watson, Pacific Areas

Dennis Parizek, Utah

Frederick Green, Washington

Rodney Birkle, Wyoming

Please rise as Commander-in-Chief-Elect is escorted to his station.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Let me please call on Commander-in-Chief-Elect Brian J. Duffy for his announcement of appointments for the ensuing year.

*ANNOUNCEMENTS OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT
DUFFY*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: My appointments for the term which I am elected are:

Adjutant General, Robert E. Wallace, New Jersey.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Chief of Staff -- we'll have to wonder for a moment.

(Placement of cap and badge.)

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Chief of Staff, Carl J. Kaelin of Kentucky.

(Applause)

(Placement of cap and badge.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: The Inspector General, Harold J. Roesch of Virginia.

(Applause)

(Placement of cap and badge.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien of Florida.

(Applause)

(Placement of cap and badge.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Commander-in-Chief?

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: We will now proceed with the installation of officers.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the installing officer to a position on my right.

Installing officer is Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron, assisted by Past Commander-in-Chief Glen Gardner.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to discern the following: Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility for all the officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: He has.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General and ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Have you the Charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: I have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: You will now surrender the gavel to me.

Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. It is proper to remind you that in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief, it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office. You will now station yourself to my right.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the altar as the Assistant Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL JONES:

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Keith Harman

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Vincent "B. J." Lawrence

Adjutant General, Robert E. Wallace
Quartermaster General, Debra Anderson
Chaplain, Peter Hook
Judge Advocate General, Tony Wolusky
Surgeon General, Dr. James R. Tuorila
Chief of Staff, Carl J. Kaelin
Inspector General, Harold J. "Hal" Roesch;
Sergeant-at-Arms, Bryan O'Brien

Newly-elected Council Members:

Walter W. Watts, Junior
Michael K. Ferguson
Earl Fulk
Bruce R. Dolan
Stanley Y. Fernandez
Rick W. Johnson
Bobby J. Cox
Art Widhalm
Gilbert Hernandez
Kathie Schiebel
James H. Hapala
Bert W. Key
Shawn C. Watson
Dennis L. Parizek
Frederick A. Green
Rodney A. Birkle.
Sergeant-at-Arms Bryan O'Brien.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir, the officers are present to be installed, sir.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Please rise, National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will administer to you your officers' obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, officers' obligation was administered at this time.)

As you were. Parade rests.
Comrade Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT HOOK: Almighty God, our guide and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these, our comrades, who now become fellow officers. We beseech Thee, O Lord, who are ever present amongst us grant wisdom unto them so that in their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our

glorious country, and to better our organization. May Thy strength sustain them. May Thy power preserve them. May Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

(Amen)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Cover.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: As you were.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Yes, sir.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. Learn well the responsibilities entrusted to you so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The bylaws and ritual of our organization prescribed in detail, the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you, through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourself thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect to the roster.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect Brian J. Duffy, before administering your obligation, it is proper to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the charter of this organization, and at the end of your term of office you will deliver to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty to see that all National officers perform their duties to the best of their abilities. You shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization. Strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be requested to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You're expected to make a special study of the Congressional Charter, bylaws, and ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our great organization.

Comrade Brian J. Duffy, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, and give your name as I touch your hand and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Installing Officer Cameron administered the obligation to Commander-in-Chief-Elect Duffy at this time.)

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter. Also, I'll present you with this gavel, which is your emblem of authority. Use it firmly but with discretion.

All National Officers, please stand and stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me, "Commander-in-Chief Brian J. Duffy" --

("Commander-in-Chief Brian J. Duffy")

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: -- "to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

("to you I pledge my sincere allegiance.")

INSTALLING OFFICER CAMERON: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, officers, and delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year.

(Applause)

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Thank you, Comrades, and my sincere gratitude to all the delegates of the 117th National Convention for the honor, for the trust, and the confidence that you have placed in me.

I want to first congratulate our new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Keith Harman from Ohio, and our new Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief B. J. Lawrence from New Mexico; of course, our new Auxiliary National President Colette Bishop from Iowa and her line of officers. And also a hardy well done to their entire organization for exceeding 100 percent membership.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: I want to also thank past Commander-in-Chief Big John Biedrzycki from Pennsylvania and John Stroud from Nevada who welcomed me onto their teams;

Past Adjutant General John Hamilton, Quartermaster General Larry Maher, and Assistant Adjutant General Jerry Newberry for their long and dedicated service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars;

And to our new Adjutant General Bob Wallace; Quartermaster General Debra Anderson; and Assistant Adjutant General and the new Executive Director of the Kansas City office, Kevin Jones, for stepping up to the plate to meet the challenges and the opportunities that lay before our great organization.

I also want to recognize a few individuals who gave me the strength and greatly enriched my life and spirit and who join me in the commitment to serve our nation's veterans, her troops, and all their families, past, present, and future;

To the late Copper T. Holt of Tennessee for his early encouragement;

To Billy Ray Cameron, North Carolina, for installing me, along with Glen Gardner;

And to all the past Commander-in-Chiefs for their support and mentorship;

To my great comrades in the Southern Conference, and especially my new Chief of Staff Carl Kaelin from Kentucky, and our new Inspector General Hal Roesch from Virginia;

In the beginning, to Cookstown Post 6590 in New Jersey where I first joined this great organization; and to Garden City Post 120 in New York, who welcomed me as I transitioned from the Air Force; to Middletown Post 1170; Kentucky's District 6, and the entire Department of Kentucky, where my new job with UPS allowed me to put down roots;

To the love of my life, Jean, and our two children, Tara and Andrew, for helping those roots to grow strong;

And to my mother and father for bringing those roots over here from Ireland.

Comrades, two months ago, thanks to the leadership initiative of our Membership Director Bob Crider and his staff, I received a briefing from seven new MBA graduates from Rockhurst University in Kansas City. Their master's project was about the VFW brand.

And one of those seven grads was a VFW-eligible veteran who hadn't yet joined because he thought we didn't represent him personally. In other words, he wasn't sold on the VFW brand.

After he was discharged, he wanted to be part of something big. He said he wanted to be part of something that was cool. It had to be one or the other because dull and boring didn't cut it for him.

And then came the branding project. And the deep dive that they did into what the VFW is and what we do and who we do it for. And one of his takeaways is that the VFW has to brag more. And I wholeheartedly agree. Because brand is what the customer thinks, not how we perceive ourselves when we look in the mirror.

And we all know that this great big organization we call the VFW does something very cool. But sadly most Americans, and especially those who serve in uniform, just don't really know us because we don't shout from the rooftops enough.

We don't tell them about the cool things that we do, like raising nearly \$50 million annually to support our communities.

We don't tell them that we volunteer 9 million reported hours annually to assist others.

We don't tell them that we provide well over \$5 million in grants to help veterans, to help their families through emergency financial situations.

We help more than 80,000 veterans transitioning in the military to receive \$1.5 billion annually in their earned compensation pension from the VA.

We don't tell them that we provide millions in scholarships to veterans, service members, high school, and middle school students.

Being directly responsible for working with Congress to create, protect, and enhance virtually every quality of life initiative, every program for our nation's veterans, our service members, and for their families.

And that's -- everything that we do is free. And we do it because we just want to pay it forward to all of those who serve.

That's what a cool organization does. We just need to tell our story more, to share our story more, to talk the talk --

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: -- to walk the walk, to belong to something big, to do something cool, to brag more.

Comrades, there are your three takeaways. We must push the message that the VFW is an organization that has always been rooted in service to others. That we, as an organization, are doers; and we're an organization comprised of patriots who returned home from their wars and conflicts as better, more compassionate, more confident human beings.

We need to fully leverage all our communication tools to better tell our service story, your service story, and the activities of today's VFW.

Our National Headquarters will soon unveil a new, intuitive Web site, coupled with a new mobile app for your smart phones, and a new direction for the VFW magazine that will focus more on what we do as an organization today.

We will also continue to produce more high-quality public service announcements for your use online, for you to share with your local news medias, outlets, and any others who will help share our stories, your story of service to others.

I promise the VFW National will do its part, but National can't do this alone. We need your departments, we need your posts to turn up the volume, to adjust the squelch and to communicate every story to include the VFW action alerts regarding legislation that we either want passed or defeated.

And if VFW ever gets maligned along the way in our positions, we'll correct that record too and very loudly. As it's often said, it's not bragging if you can back it up. And, Comrades, we can back it up. And that's why my rally cry -

-

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: We have to brag. We have to tell that story. And that's why my rally and cry for this year is "Clear the Way." We need to take ownership of our brand and change the community's view of the VFW.

Every VFW post is considered a nest of heroes but not always as a strategic asset that can be relied on time and time again as the go-to patriotic organization, full of willing volunteers who put community and nation above self.

And that's a narrative that only we can change. And brand ownership has to be embraced at the local post level. I need you to push the message that

the success of the VFW has always been because of our service to others. It's how we pay it forward to every generation who raises their right hand and takes the oath that very few have taken.

I need you to embrace social media just as much as you already embrace smart phone technology. Why? Because it communicates instantly and allows for instant feedback from not only our membership but from the communities we serve.

It also allows you to push special projects, such as the Mental Health Awareness program the National President and I will be embarking on working on this year, which will include partnering with our National mental health nonprofit, such as Give an Hour and One Mind.

Comrades, it's no secret that 20 veterans commit suicide every day. But what most folks don't know is only five of those veterans -- five of them are enrolled in the VA.

Professional mental health counseling isn't the VFW's forte insomuch as having walked the talk is. And that's powerful relevance for those who deploy and for their families who anxiously await their safe return.

And it doesn't matter if your war was in Europe, was in Africa, was in Asia or the Middle East. It doesn't matter whether it was in this century or the last. We were all younger once, and we all came back different in one respect or another. So include thinking that no one understood us.

Comrades, the VFW cannot allow any service member, any service member, to ever think that no one understands them, which is why earlier this month I was proud to be a panelist at the National Press Club, along with representatives from Give an Hour, the George W. Bush Institute, and the global communication and marketing firm Edelman. We were there to discuss the campaign to change direction.

What we are doing is changing the veterans' narrative. We can call it the veterans' brand, a brand right now that has 40 percent of Americans believing that half of all veterans are experiencing mental health challenges, and an astounding 92 percent of employers believing veterans need access to mental health care programs.

The National president and I will keep you posted, as our mission to change that narrative expands, and what you need to be doing at the local level to help.

Comrades, my commitment to you is to double down, double down on our service to others. Service with a focus and more funding for programs that assist your fellow veterans, our troops, and their families.

Our service grant program will be enhanced to help you better execute your mission and perhaps to earn the right of future efforts.

I will say that those posts who truly excel, who embrace community service will receive national recognition and access to additional grant funding.

But this extra support comes with an entry fee. And that's for your departments, for your posts to get onboard with social media and start

communicating your services, your successes, your best practices, your story, our story.

Doing so lets others know that you're part of something big. That you're doing something cool. And that you're sharing your stories.

I will also capitalize on the fact that the VFW just elected its first Desert Storm veteran as Commander-in-Chief, and that the younger VFW leaders being elected every year are coming from more recent wars. And they're being elected to higher and higher offices.

In fact, this year, several state commanders are Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. We also have six women state commanders along with our Quartermaster General filling those ranks, all are taking their rightful place in the succession of leaders in the history of our great organization.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Comrades, the VFW has a 117-year-old pedigree. And what that means -- perhaps it means nothing new to the new generation of veterans who need to be sold on why we charge dues, and when newer veteran organizations simply harvest emails.

I will admit that the public perception of the VFW has too often been eclipsed by some of these newer organizations. Much of their success can be directly attributed to their effective two-way communication. That's why I'm pushing technology so much.

We should embrace other new veterans service organizations, where possible, and partner with them, especially those who like getting their hands dirty out in the community. After 15 years of nonstop war, these younger comrades bring to the table what we need. They bring action, not talk. Action, which is an energy we need to fully embrace and absorb.

Historically, most new war-specific organizations fade away once their wars end. And that's what makes the VFW so unique. Because we are built on the rocks of eternity, not the sands of time.

And I'm proud to be a Gulf War veteran. I must take this opportunity to thank the Vietnam veterans everywhere, here, back home, all across America. They were the ones that helped America heal, for teaching America how to disassociate the politics of war for the warrior fighting the war, and for ensuring that my generation got a parade when we returned home.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Yes. Comrades, I talk about the future because our organization can no longer operate like we did in the past. I need not remind you that service is why 14 veterans founded this organization back in 1899. Service is our product. And service to others is why we're all here this week in Charlotte. You're the leaders of our great organization.

I ask you to dream big. Get out of your box. Commit to making the hard, right choices instead of the easy, wrong ones; to be inclusive, not exclusive; to talk less and execute more; to find ways to say yes more than you will say no;

to reach out to organizations like the Student Veterans of America, which has 1300 chapters on colleges and campuses everywhere.

And I ask you if you have a military installation in your backyard, make sure your post sponsors on-base military awards programs. Because in the military world, visibility is everything. So being invited to these events gives you an opportunity to give your best two-minute elevator pitch to an attentive crowd who identifies with belonging to something big, who identifies doing something cool, and who are unafraid to brag when it's true.

Comrades, I want to again congratulate our great Auxiliary for exceeding 100 percent membership. And I also want to congratulate our 22 departments, our 71 districts, and our 272 posts who also exceeded that leadership goal.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Along with recruiting new members, we should also take a lesson from the business world as it pertains to bringing back customers; in our case, we call it reinstating former members.

Selling to former customers is normally easier than acquiring new ones, with success rates historically ranging from 20 to 40 percent. That's often contingent on finding out, first and foremost, why did they leave us in the first place.

And the only way to do this is to ask them, ask them with the full expectation of getting an earful back in response. How many post commanders, how many department commanders, or adjutants ask former members, "Why didn't you renew your membership?"

How many explained that if they didn't like this post, that they could transfer to another post, or they could join over as a member at large.

Perhaps joining the social media world might communicate also a message of progress back to these former members, as well as advertise your local post accomplishments, and present new volunteer opportunities to those who might want to come back into the fold.

Comrades, I pledge to do everything on my end to turn the tide. And the first thing I'm doing is listening more, like to that young veteran from Rockhurst University I told you about earlier, Kenneth Stowell, who I'm proud to say is now a new member of VFW Post 7356 in Parkville, Missouri.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: When I first became a member, it was at VFW Post 6590 in Cookstown, New Jersey, because I and it had a desire. What it had, it had a robust troop support program for the nearby Air Force, Army, and Navy installations.

The camaraderie within Post 6590 kept me coming back. And the mentorship of post leaders like Bobby Hacker and Donny Wine increased my awareness of the VFW's service first mission.

In my case, it was the energy of knowing that every hand that I shook was from another great American patriot. And I wanted to meet men and

women who served in every American war or conflict going back in my history books. And I wanted to meet their families too and ask how they were doing, and if there was anything that the VFW could do to help, to assist.

I wanted to hear their stories. I wanted to share mine. I wanted to join something bigger than myself, and I did. And I wanted to do something cool. I'm doing something very cool now.

I wanted to keep sharing my story.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: I wanted to keep sharing my story. But, more importantly, I wanted to keep sharing your story. I wanted to keep sharing our collective story of continued service to our great nation. I strongly believe that service is the path to our future, and that increased membership will be a welcome organic by-product of our service to others.

Replenishing our ranks is even more important, if we are to keep beating back the efforts of politicians, pundits, and politically-motivated organizations who want to dismantle and privatize VA health care, with some even proposing that veterans should be charged for their service-connected care.

To that the VFW says, "Hell, no!"

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Election year or no election year, I promise you that the VFW will not stand as politicians who do not use the VA health care system, much less who never served, try to dictate when and where veterans can receive care.

We have collected direct feedback from 20,000 veterans. And their message is very clear: Improve the VA; do not -- don't dismantle the VA health care system.

And before I conclude, I want to again thank the city of Charlotte and its convention center and this fantastic hospitality.

And to the convention chairmen, Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron and Past North Carolina Department Commander Jack Goin for an outstanding job.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: How about another round of applause? Absolutely.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Comrades, let me just touch again on the guests that we had, this being a political year, when the eyes of the nation were upon us this week as we heard from both presidential candidates. And what we heard were mostly the right things, about properly taking care of veterans, service members, and their families.

We heard about fixing the VA and about the internal and external challenges and the threats that face our nation.

Comrades, between now and November, you are going to hear many promises from many candidates running for every public office. And no matter your party or ideology, I encourage you to make your positions known to all your candidates.

Let them know that our VFW cares about the safety, that we care about the security of our nation, our people, and our allies. And that ending sequestration is a must.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: And let them know that eliminating or outsourcing the VA is a nonstarter. Make sure that they know that the VA -- or the VFW, excuse me, is a nonpartisan organization, but not to misconstrue our neutrality as an opportunity to malign us.

Let them know that veterans matter. Let them know that veterans vote. And let them know no one -- and I repeat no one -- does more for veterans than our Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Again --

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: -- you have the voice. You have the tools. You need to communicate.

And I thank you again for this great honor. God bless our organization, our men and women in uniform, their families, the United States of America. Now I ask you, let's get out there and brag. Thank you.

(Standing ovation)

*PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN
AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT DUFFY: Thank you, Comrades. Please be seated.

At this time, I've got the distinct honor, along with our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Keith Harman, to present our immediate past Commander-in-Chief, John Biedrzycki, with a ceremonial bronze Commander-in-Chief hat.

It's his personal gift from both Keith and I. And it's a tradition that has lived on for many years. And at this time, past Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DUFFY: I also will be passing to Betty Jean, his bride, his past Commander-in-Chief's pin, signifying and identifying him as one of the few, and one of my favorites already, to be in the ranks of Past Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

With that, I will present him his Gold VFW Membership Card.

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you so much for this honor. It will be an honor I'll wear the rest of my life, as past Commander-in-Chief of the greatest veterans organization ever to exist and ever will exist. Thank you.

(Applause)

CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Well, Brian and Keith, it's off to the future. And so at this time we will entertain a motion to adjourn the convention. Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAVID PROHASKA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, David Prohaska, delegate, Post 4434, Department of Michigan, there being no further business to come before this convention, and the officers having been duly elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 117th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMRADE TOM BROWN: Commander-in-Chief, Tom Brown, State Commander, Pennsylvania. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you.

You have before you a motion properly seconded to close the 117th VFW National Convention.

Is there a question on the motion? Question on the motion? Question on the motion?

Not hearing one, all those in favor, please say "Aye."

(Aye)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Those opposed, "No." The motion carries.

(Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Sergeant-at-Arms.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: You will now proceed with the closing ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Sir.

Comrades, please rise.

National Sergeants, attention.

Comrade National Chaplain.

Uncover. Parade rest.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HOOK: May God's good favor and blessing be with each of us as we separate. We, once again, realize the value of being a part of this great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

We are grateful for life, for liberty, and the freedom to pursue happiness. Help each of us as we seek to live as good citizens and carry out our responsibilities well. In Your name, amen.

(Amen)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Cover. National Sergeants, attention.

Captain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard, advance and retire the flag of the United States of America.

NATIONAL HONOR GUARD CAPTAIN: On your command, sir.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS O'BRIEN: Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, the close of the 117th Convention has been completed, sir.

ADJOURNMENT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BIEDRZYCKI: Thank you. On your way out, make sure and don't forget to get your tickets for this afternoon's reception.

The 117th National Convention is closed, and we are adjourned sine die.

(Whereupon, the Convention was duly adjourned at 11:16 a.m.)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL
ORGANIZATION AT THE 117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, CHARLOTTE, NORTH
CAROLINA

Resolution No. 201 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

ENHANCEMENT OF MEMBERSHIP REPORTING OF ACTUAL MEMBERSHIP

WHEREAS, the current membership reporting system does not indicate the actual membership count of transferred Life members after Post payout has been made; and

WHEREAS, member statistics only shows the membership count for the current year after Life member payout has occurred; and

WHEREAS, Post, District and Department membership programs are dependent upon the percentage based on previous year versus current year membership; and

WHEREAS, Life members transferred after payout has been paid does not increase the percentage of Post membership even though they are in fact members of the Post which they transferred in to; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to add to the existing screen on the National Membership reporting screen or enhance the existing screen to reflect the total membership of the Post in all categories for paid members. The total of all members in paid categories would reflect the actual membership of Posts, Districts and Departments. This would more accurately reflect membership totals. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 202 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS RIDER'S GROUPS

WHEREAS, on August 23, 2010, the Veterans of Foreign Wars passed Resolution 308, pursuant to the operations and guidelines of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Rider's Groups; and

WHEREAS, the VFWRG was established to promote and support the programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, to promote motorcycle

safety programs, to provide a social atmosphere for VFW members who share the same interest; and

WHEREAS, the VFWRG has supported the VFW initiatives and the National Convention with the establishment of the Howard Vander Clute Memorial Motorcycle Ride; and

WHEREAS, the VFWRG has expanded VFW membership to multiple states within the nation, recruiting new members to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and providing activities to retain current existing members; and

WHEREAS, the VFWRG has been recognized in the community and by those within the Veterans of Foreign Wars leadership as a valued program within the Veterans of Foreign Wars; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States endorses recognizing and transferring oversight and management of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Rider's Groups to the control of the Programs Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 203 (Submitted by Department of California)

CORRECT THE VFW'S MEMBERSHIP STATUS PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the current Post Membership Status Program runs annually from July 1 through June 30 of each year; and

WHEREAS, the Membership Status Program count is a significant part of the All State and All American Programs; and

WHEREAS, the Membership Status Program does not include paid-up members in the Membership Status Program if their membership became effective before July 1 of the current program year; and

WHEREAS, PAID UP MEMBERS THAT ARE NOT COUNTED in the Post Membership Status are active members of a Post and are entitled to all benefits available to members, except they are not counted as part of the Post Membership Status Program. This is unfair to the member and the Post as it is extremely difficult to get a person to renew membership when they have six (6) months or more before renewal is required and Posts who do the programs are not given a fair chance to get recognition for their efforts to become an All State or All American Post; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the Post Member Status Program be amended to include all paid up members in a Post. (Rejected)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL RESOLUTIONS AT THE 117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION,
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Resolution No. 301 (Submitted by Department of Hawaii)

INTERNATIONAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

WHEREAS, our returning Vietnam military personnel were not officially thanked and honored for their Vietnam Service, including personnel held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action for their service and sacrifice on behalf nor thanked and honor to the families of these veterans; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii plays a unique role because (1) the Vietnam war took place in PACOM's AOR, (2) our allies who fought in the war (Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Thailand) are ALL located in PACOM's AOR, (3) multiple unit's in Hawaii, including the 25th Division participated in the Vietnam War, (4) many Vietnam veterans and their families took their rest and relaxation in Hawaii during the war; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii is the ideal place to hold local, national, regional or international events. It is the perfect place to bring Allies of that war together; many have Consulate General in Hawaii and Vietnam veterans will want to return to Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii formed a 50th Anniversary Vietnam committee with the support of Lt. General Mick Kicklighter, Director DOD Office of Commemoration, Washington, D.C. with the support of the Hawaii Governor and State Legislature to support and provide the following activities in the year 2017:

May 23 (Tuesday) Aloha Welcome Reception

May 24 (Wednesday) Hawaii Night. Taste of Hawaii, Hawaii Cultural Entertainment, 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Food booths, military bands

May 25 (Thursday) POW/MIA Night – Pacific Aviation Museum Banquet, 5 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

May 26 (Friday) Welcome Home concert, 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

May 27 (Saturday) Veterans Parade (American Vietnam veterans, former members of the Republic of South Vietnam military Allied Nations veterans) 12 noon to 4:30 p.m.

May 28 (Sunday) International 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, Memorial Candlelight Ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (U.S. Veterans Allies, Gold Star/MIA families, U.S. Secretary of Defense and Secretary Defense of Allied Nations), 3 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

May 29 (Monday) State wide Memorial Day Ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, additional information and signups for the various activities may be accessed using the following website: www.vietnam50years.org; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we fully support this resolution to promote, encourage participation, disseminate information and support wherever possible for the 50th Vietnam Anniversary activities which will take place from 23 to 29 May 2017 on the island of Oahu, Honolulu, Hawaii. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 302 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR MEMORIAL

WHEREAS, from September 2001 through present, more than 2.5 million American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen answered the call to aggressively pursue our nation’s enemies on fronts across the globe; and

WHEREAS, with an All-Volunteer Force they continue to fight in America’s longest war, which has so far resulted in more than 6,800 deaths and 50,000 wounded as a result of their commitment to freedom and democracy; and

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation is seeking Congressional approval to build a memorial in Washington, D.C., to remember the selfless contributions of multiple generations of Americans who have served and sacrificed over the past two decades and to educate future generations of Americans and citizens around the globe about the fight against evil; and

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation will bear the burden of raising 100 percent of the proceeds for GWOT Memorial through private sources and donations with the goal date for the completion of the memorial to be in the year 2024; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, endorses building the Global War on Terror Memorial as a lasting tribute to the courage, commitment, service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces during our nation's longest war. (Approved)

Resolution No. 303 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

THE UNITED STATES VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS NATIONAL VIETNAM
VETERANS DAY OF RECOGNITION (NOT A HOLIDAY)

WHEREAS, Veterans Day (originally Armistice Day) is an official United States federal holiday that is observed annually on November 11, honoring those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces also known as veterans. It coincides with other holidays including Armistice Day and Remembrance Day which are celebrated in other parts of the world and also marks the anniversary of the end of World War I (major hostilities of World War I were formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, when the Armistice with Germany went into effect); and

WHEREAS, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day which is observed annually in the United States on December 7, is to remember and honor the 2,403 victims who were killed in the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. On August 23, 1994, United States Congress by Pub. L. 103-308, designated December 7 of each year as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day; and

WHEREAS, July 1998 marked the 45th anniversary of the signing of the treaty that ended the Korean War which lasted from 1950 through 1953. To mark the anniversary, the President of the United States proclaimed July 27 a national day of recognition to commemorate the more than 37,000 U.S. service personnel who lost their lives during the 37 months of combat in Korea; and

WHEREAS, designated dates commemorating the service and sacrifice made by American men and women while serving in the United States Armed Forces during time of our countries wars and conflicts are valuable opportunity for veterans to provide living history in schools and college class room across the nation; and

WHEREAS, following the Paris Peace Accords of 27 January 1973, all American troops were withdrawn by 29 March 1973; and

WHEREAS, over nine (9) million American service men and women served on active duty during the Vietnam Era: Aug. 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, over 8.7 million American service men and women were on active duty during the Vietnam War: Aug. 5, 1964 – March 28, 1973; and

WHEREAS, over 3.7 million American service men and women served in Vietnam (including 514,300 offshore) personnel served in the Southeast Asia Theater (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Flight crews based in Thailand, and sailors in adjacent South China Sea waters); and

WHEREAS, over 2.6 million American service men and women served within the borders of South Vietnam: Jan. 1, 1965 – Mar. 28, 1973 including over 7,000 women who served in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, 58,202 American service men and women made the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War including 8 nurses, 1 of which was killed in action; and

WHEREAS, over 303,000 American service men and women were wounded during the Vietnam War including 75,000 that were severely disabled during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, there were 2,338 American Armed Forces personnel that were missing in action with 1,626 still unaccounted for; and

WHEREAS, there were 766 POW's with 114 dying in captivity some imprisoned for up to 8 years; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam War was an extremely divisive issue among the people of the United States and a conflict that caused a generation of veterans to wait too long for the United States public to acknowledge and honor the services and sacrifices of such veterans; and

WHEREAS, members of the United States Armed Forces served bravely and faithfully for the United States during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a “Vietnam Veterans Day of Recognition (Not a Holiday)” would be an appropriate way to honor those members of the United States Armed Forces who served in South Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, calls upon the United States Congress to pass legislation amending U.S. Code Title 36, Chapter I – Patriotic and National Observances and Ceremonies by adding the following:

§ 145. Vietnam Veterans Day of Recognition

“President may issue each year a proclamation –

- (1) That designating March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day of Recognition to commemorate the more than 58,000 U.S. service personnel who lost their lives during the Vietnam War and the 1,626 American service personnel still unaccounted for during the Vietnam War;
- (2) That honors and recognizes the contributions of veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam during war and during peace;
- (3) That encourages States and local governments to establish a Vietnam Veterans Day; and
- (4) That encourages the people of the United States to observe Vietnam Veterans Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities;
- (A) That provides the appreciation veterans of the Vietnam War deserve but did not receive upon returning home from the war;
- (B) That demonstrates the resolve that never again shall the people of the United States disregard and denigrate a generation of veterans;
- (C) That promotes awareness of the faithful service and contributions of the veterans of the Vietnam War during military service as well as to the communities of the veterans since returning home;
- (D) That promote awareness of the importance of entire communities empowering veterans and the families of veterans in helping the veterans readjust to civilian life after military service; and

(E) That promote opportunities for veterans of the Vietnam War to assist younger veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in rehabilitation from wounds, both seen and unseen and to support the reintegration of younger veterans into civilian life". (Rejected)

Resolution No. 304(Submitted by Department of California)

CORRECT THE VIETNAM WAR RECORD

WHEREAS, the official record of the Viet Nam War identifies the United States losing the war; and

WHEREAS, it is assumed the cause of losing the Viet Nam War is the fault of the military; and

WHEREAS, the United States entered the war to assist the people of South Viet Nam to retain their democratic form of government and restrain the advancement of communism in the region; and

WHEREAS, a peace agreement between the United States and North Viet Nam and its allies was executed on January 27, 1973 based on the following conditions:

- a. South Viet Nam remain a sovereign nation
- b. North Viet Nam agrees to release all U.S. and other POW's
- c. United States agreed to withdraw all U.S. troops and dismantle all U.S. bases, within 60 days
- d. Both sides agree to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia and the prohibition of bases in and troop movement through these countries
- e. The DMZ at the 17th parallel would remain a provisional dividing line, with the eventual reunification of the country "through peaceful means"
- f. North Viet Nam agrees that they would not initiate military movement across the DMZ and that there would be no use of force to reunify the country; and

WHEREAS, POW's were returned on February 14, 1973 and U.S. troops were withdrawn from South Viet Nam by March 30, 1973 and the provisions of the treaty provided for the continued peaceful existence of South Viet Nam and its people and stability in the region; and

WHEREAS, no state of war existed between North Viet Nam and the United States on April 30, 1975, the date South Viet Nam surrendered to North Viet Nam; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that the record be corrected to reflect that the U.S. military veterans of the Viet Nam War did not lose and that this organization, the VFW, at all levels use its influence to correct the record. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 305 Submitted by Department of Virginia)

ESTABLISH A MEMORIAL TO THOSE WHO SERVED IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has a firm belief that our nation should build memorials commemorating the service of the US Armed Forces especially during times of conflict so that our nation never forgets those who sacrificed so much for our freedom; and

WHEREAS, more than 3 million Americans have served in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and OPERATION NEW DAWN in Iraq and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, between March 19, 2003 and December 15, 2011, the US Armed Forces suffered more than 36,000 killed and wounded in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, OPERATION NEW DAWN in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, between October 7, 2001 and December 31, 2014, the US Armed Forces suffered more than 22,000 killed and wounded in OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urges Congress to pass legislation authorizing the construction of a national memorial dedicated to those who served and sacrificed in Iraq and Afghanistan in the period after September 11, 2001 that would be funded by private donations. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 306 (Submitted by Department of Virginia)

ESTABLISH THE ARMED FORCES UNIVERSITY

WHEREAS, since 1972 the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) has conferred college degrees accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to better prepare Airmen to compete in the civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Air University Associate to Baccalaureate Cooperative (AU-ABC) program partnered CCAF with 42 universities, articulating the transferability of credits for persistence purposes; and

WHEREAS, research conducted by the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship demonstrated the persistent problems for veterans who leave the military and enter the civilian workforce without easily-transferrable skills; and

WHEREAS, the Congressional Research Service showed that extending the CCAF model across all armed services could be a cost-effective method in improving the preparedness of today's military to enter the workforce; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish the Armed Forces University for the purpose of conferring accredited college degrees on military-trained personnel to improve preparedness for the civilian workforce. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 307 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PETITION TO SET ASIDE A PORTION OF THE
NORMANDY D-DAY INVASION BEACHES AS A SITE FOR REMEMBRANCE AND
REFLECTION

WHEREAS, the greatest amphibious assault in the history of warfare began on June 6, 1944, when the allied troops began the invasion of the Normandy beaches to liberate German-occupied Europe; and

WHEREAS, D-Day, codenamed Operation Overlord, marked the beginning of the end of WWII, with over 150,000 allied troops involved in the invasion; and

WHEREAS, the United States National D-Day Memorial Foundation determined that there were 4,413 Allied fatalities on D-Day, including 2,499 Americans; and

WHEREAS, monuments honoring D-Day exist, all the invasion beaches are public beaches. The very aspects that made these beaches vitally important to the Allied forces also make them highly desirable for "a day at the beach" by tourists and resident beachgoers; and

WHEREAS, the sacrifices made on these beaches make them sacred ground, with the memories of these sacrifices growing dimmer with each passing year; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we express our support for Brandon Leach's petition to set aside a small portion of the Normandy D-Day invasion beaches as a historic site, a site of remembrance and reflection, where swimming and sand castle building are strictly prohibited, where it will serve as a tribute to the men who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to begin the liberation of France and the rest of Europe and to preserve freedom in the world. (Approved)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE 117TH
NATIONAL CONVENTION, CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Resolution No. 401 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

END SEQUESTRATION

WHEREAS, sequestration is the result of a failed budget agreement from the Budget Control Act of 2011, which raised the federal debt ceiling on an agreement to offset the increase with a corresponding decrease in federal discretionary spending over a 10-year period. A bipartisan Congressional committee was created to identify which federal accounts to reduce, and as a penalty, an automatic 10 percent across-the-board sequester would kick in should the committee fail to reach an agreement, which it did; and

WHEREAS, sequestration began in the second half of FY 2013, and its impact on the military — which accounts for half of the government's total discretionary budget — was immediate. In order to meet mandatory spending cuts without impacting combat operations in Afghanistan, the four services had to slash flying, sailing and troop training, as well as furlough its civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, occurring simultaneously was a planned \$487 billion reduction in Pentagon spending over a 10-year period. This is why the Army is shrinking from a wartime high of 570,000 active-duty soldiers to 450,000 by the end of 2017. Sequestration doubles the budget cut, and would further drop Army end-strength to 420,000 soldiers; and

WHEREAS, two Bipartisan Budget Agreements have since been signed to temporarily suspend the sequester, the latest of which in November 2015, delays its return for two more years, but suspended or not, sequestration is still the law of the land; and

WHEREAS, meanwhile, the world has become far more dangerous and unpredictable in the five years since sequestration was created, and the impact of cutting almost \$1 trillion from the Pentagon's budget — no matter how dispersed — could eliminate not just quality of life programs for military personnel and their families, but have a tremendous impact on readiness and modernization programs, to the point of jeopardizing the military's ability to respond when and where needed. Sequestration also impacts other federal agencies, most notably the Department of Homeland Security and its many subsidiary units, plus it is still unknown how a restarted sequester could impact future budgets requests for the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, sequestration cripples the government's ability to operate, to secure our country and her citizens, and it threatens to dismantle every quality of life program the VFW has helped to create for veterans, service members and their families everywhere; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we demand that the United States Congress eliminate sequestration. (Approved)

Resolution No. 402 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE TROOPS AND THEIR WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States supports the Commander-in-Chief and our military and intelligence agencies in their mission to identify, target and destroy terrorists wherever they hide; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the Administration and Congress provide the military with the resources necessary to succeed in this global fight against a shadow threat, as well as to properly care for those American service members who return home wounded, ill or injured, and their families; and

WHEREAS, it is equally critical that U.S. intelligence agencies be properly resourced in order to identify threats to U.S. security and interests by organized extremist groups or lone individuals, both foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the Administration and Congress heed the expert counsel of field commanders regarding future troop buildups or reductions, and modernization initiatives. This includes working together in a bipartisan manner to end the draconian effects of sequestration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the Commander-in-Chief and the brave men and women in uniform who prosecute the war on terrorism, and that we call upon Congress to end sequestration and provide our military and the nation's intelligence agencies the necessary resources to identify, target and destroy our enemies wherever they exist. (Approved)

Resolution No. 403 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's Number #1 priority is to defend herself and her citizens, yet continued efforts to keep defense spending below 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product jeopardizes the Defense Department's ability to properly train, equip and field a military that can defeat all enemies, as well as protect vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the fact the U.S. spends more on defense than the next 8 or 10 countries combined is a false narrative. With the exception of China and Russia, all the other countries are focused on homeland and/or shared theater defense alliances, whereas the U.S. has a worldwide commitment to project power, reliability and leadership; and

WHEREAS, defense spending today is approximately 16 percent of the total federal budget — the lowest since before World War II — but defense spending accounts for nearly half of all discretionary spending, which makes DOD a consistent target for lawmakers trying to reduce overall federal spending, but at the risk of making America less safe; and

WHEREAS, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the FY 2016 defense budget of \$610 billion (including overseas contingency funding) is estimated to only account for 3.5 percent of the nation's GDP, and the requested \$583 billion for FY 2017 will amount to 3.3 percent of estimated GDP; and

WHEREAS, the military shrinks in terms of installations, manpower and material at the end of every war, but bringing the troops home

has yet to make the world any less dangerous, our enemies any more predictable, or reduce the world's reliance on the United States to lead every contingency or humanitarian operation. Nor has our nation's war against international terrorism ended; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial that any proposed reduction not jeopardize America's security or break faith with those who serve or have served her in uniform. A nation that cherishes its freedom and supports the troops can afford to do both; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to end sequestration and to provide the necessary funding equal to not less than 5 percent of GDP for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow. (Approved)

Resolution No. 404 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SECURE AMERICA'S BORDERS

WHEREAS, America is threatened by those intent on doing her harm, whether they be illegal or legal immigrants, those who intentionally overstay their visas, or American born or naturalized citizens who receive paramilitary training at home or abroad by belligerent countries or nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, the House Homeland Security Committee estimates that 250 Americans are among 4,500 Westerners who have traveled to the battlefield to join Islamic terrorist groups. Some 40 of them have returned to the U.S., with a handful having traveled to the warzone multiple times. The committee's final report on *Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel*, published September 2015, lists 32 key findings and concerns that include the lack of a coordinated national and international strategy, Western passports being issued to foreign jihadists masquerading as refugees, and the hesitance of U.S. authorities to revoke U.S. passports because the Supreme Court has ruled that an individual's right to travel cannot be violated without due process; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported 337,117 apprehensions in 2015, a 30-percent decline over the previous year, but they also stopped 225,342 inadmissible individuals from entering the country, which was a 14-percent increase, plus arrested 8,246 people who were wanted

for serious crimes, and prevented 11,611 high-risk travelers from boarding flights destined for the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, in January 2016, while announcing that 416,500 visa overstays occurred in 2015, the Department of Homeland Security said the collection processes for arrivals and departures differ, because the U.S. did not build its border, aviation or immigration infrastructures with exit processing in mind. DHS, however, is working to improve the existing process; and

WHEREAS, despite significant increases in manpower and electronic surveillance capabilities, it is virtually impossible for DHS to operate 328 sea, land and air Ports of Entry, and provide a physical monitoring and enforcement presence along America's 2,000-mile southern border, 5,500-mile northern border, or along 12,000 miles of U.S. coastline; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to continue to fast-track funding so that the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice can expedite all initiatives to secure America's borders from all threats, foreign and domestic, and for the U.S. Government to continue to aggressively identify, confine and deport illegal aliens who commit crimes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 405 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HALT ROGUE NATION WMD PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the greatest threat to America is weapons of mass destruction—and the technology by which to make and employ them—in the hands of North Korea and Iran, as well as nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and Congress must remain suspicious of the actions and motives of North Korea and Iran, who repeatedly reject diplomatic attempts to reduce tensions and normalize relations; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continually breaks earlier agreements by conducting now four underground nuclear detonations since 2006, test firing warhead-capable missiles, and by stating it no longer honors the 1953 armistice, which is a direct threat to South Korea. North Korea is also a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries unfriendly to the United States, most notably Iran; and

WHEREAS, Iran's nuclear program is a major contention with the West and its neighboring countries. The controversial Iran Agreement limits

Iran's ability to produce and maintain fissile material for at least a decade. It reduces the number of Iranian centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,000, and reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium from 10,000 kilograms to 300. The controversy over the agreement are no enrichment facilities are being dismantled, two-week advance inspection notices, limited independent site sampling, the release of some \$150 billion in frozen overseas assets, and the removal of international sanctions. Lacking any trust that Iran will abide by the agreement, and fully knowing that short of a regime change, Iran is going to build a bomb with or without the deal. So the ongoing debate centers on whether Iran building a bomb sooner or Iran building a bomb later makes the region and world any safer; and

WHEREAS, nonaligned terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, continue to demonstrate with deadly consequences their ability to strike regionally and globally without remorse; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to do all within their power to halt the nuclear weapons development programs and transfer of nuclear weapons technology and material to rogue nations and nonaligned terrorist organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we support and encourage the U.S. Government to continue to impose unilateral sanctions as required, and to penalize all American companies and corporations that conduct business with North Korea and Iran. (Approved)

Resolution No. 406 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the U.S. State Department says the worldwide proliferation of ballistic missiles almost makes them common battlefield weapons, yet the United States has not fielded a Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system that is fully capable of detecting, intercepting, and destroying one or more ballistic missiles aimed against our homeland; and

WHEREAS, even though the Cold War missile threat against the United States has subsided, there are an estimated 6,300 ballistic missiles of different ranges that are not controlled by the U.S., NATO, Russia or China; and

WHEREAS, BMD systems have a proven capability to be able to detect, intercept and destroy ballistic missiles in flight. Despite the growing threat of rogue nations, unstable third world countries and nonaligned terrorist organizations, the United States still has no ballistic missile defense system to protect our country and her citizens from attack; and

WHEREAS, along with satellite assets, the U.S. has operational surveillance radar units deployed in the Pacific and Middle East, is continuing shipborne Aegis BMD testing in the Pacific with the SM-6, and is installing operational Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland; and

WHEREAS, U.S.-Israeli partnerships, with respect to the battlefield proven capabilities of the short-range Iron Dome weapons system, and the continued testing of the medium-range David's Sling and long-range Arrow-3, is confirming that a multi-layered defense against everything from short-range mortars, rockets and artillery shells to longer-range cruise missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles is both technologically and operationally achievable today; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to continue funding a fully integrated ballistic missile defense system to protect our country, our deployed military forces, and our allies. (Approved)

Resolution No. 407 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PRESERVE THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

WHEREAS, America's All-Volunteer Force successfully waged a 15-year, two-front war, that nobody prior to 9/11 would have thought possible without reinstating the draft. It did so despite multiple combat tours and significant military recruiting and retention challenges, and it continues to do so in an extremely dangerous and unpredictable world from new and old enemies; and

WHEREAS, the troops are concerned. They are concerned that elected and appointed officials don't understand what it's like to serve in an All-Volunteer Force that has been tasked to do so much for so long. The troops are concerned about the shrinking size of the force and whether there will be a place for them should they want to make the military a career. They are concerned about quality of life programs, their families, and the future of the GI Bill and its transferability provision. And their leaders are very concerned about potential

burnout in a military that is continually tasked to do more with less human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, the budget is forcing the military to shrink in terms of manpower, while worldwide commitments and challenges have increased, to include keeping almost 10,000 American troops in Afghanistan, conducting thousands of airstrikes against radical forces aligned with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and redeploying almost 4,000 ground troops back into Iraq; and

WHEREAS, DOD's FY 2017 budget recommendation to further lower troop numbers and reduce benefits is the direct result of a military struggling to survive a budget crisis that will only continue to grow the longer Congress is unable to end the sequester. The cumulative impact of less people, lower pay and a high operations tempo has a direct influence on morale, which in combination with a better civilian economy, could impact both recruiting and retention, and possibly threaten the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will redouble our efforts to work with Congress and the Administration to preserve the All-Volunteer Force, to end the sequester, and to help bring some permanent financial stability to a military that will continue to operate in a very dangerous and unpredictable world. (Approved)

Resolution No. 408 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

LINK MILITARY PAY INCREASES TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INCREASES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked by law to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The Administration's military pay raise request, however, can be more or less than the ECI, with Congress having the final approval; and

WHEREAS, Congress erased the double-digit pay gap of the 1990s by directing military pay raises from fiscal years 2000-2006 to be a half-percent above private-sector wage increases, and raises from FY 2007-forward to match the ECI, although more could be authorized; and

WHEREAS, the 1.7 percent military pay raise for FY 2013 matched the ECI, but the Department of Defense — in its continuing campaign to slow the growth of military compensation due to budget constraints and the sequester — recommended that future pay increases be limited, despite

knowing it could lead to another pay gap similar to the past; and

WHEREAS, over the objections of the VFW but with the approval of Congress, the “slow the growth” initiative resulted in military pay raises of 1 percent in FY 2014 and 2015, and 1.3 percent in FY 2016, with the cumulative result being less than the ECI. The 1.6 percent raise requested for FY 2017 will be only half the anticipated 3.2 percent growth in private sector wages, according to the Congressional Budget Office; and

WHEREAS, changes to military pay and benefits is the top concern of military service members and their families. Continued efforts to slow the growth of military compensation, combined with a better civilian jobs market, could directly impact recruiting and retention, which could jeopardize the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by matching annual military pay raise percentages to annual ECI increases. (Approved)

Resolution No. 409 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

INCREASE AND EXTEND TSP MATCH

WHEREAS, the new military retirement system will benefit all for their service, not just the 17 percent of service members who currently stay 20 years or longer. This recruiting initiative is needed to attract new generations of qualified enlistees who might otherwise not consider military service because it provides no match to portable 401k-style plans that virtually all civilian plans offer; and

WHEREAS, beginning in January 1, 2018, the government will automatically contribute 1 percent of base pay to a new enlistee’s Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account beginning the third month of enlistment, then up to 4 percent more through a government match beginning in Year 3 through 26 years of service, for a total of 5 percent. However, the Military Compensation and Military Retirement Commission recommended a total government contribution of 6 percent — the 1 percent automatic and up to a 5-percent match — without the arbitrary 26-year sunset clause; and

WHEREAS, the Pentagon’s FY 2017 budget submission proposes increasing the government’s contribution to the full 6 percent, and

carry the match through retirement, but would delay starting the match until Year 5; and

WHEREAS, all retirees and currently serving military are grandfathered under the current “20 years or nothing” retirement system, though some service members with less than 12 years’ service will have a one-time opportunity to opt into the new system based on their own individual circumstances; and

WHEREAS, for those who enlist after January 1, 2018, and who stay the requisite 20 years, the new retirement program will reduce future retiree pay from 50 to 40 percent of base pay, but overall net worth should be considerably higher due to a one-time, mid-career continuation bonus, and compound interest on increased TSP accounts, which can be rolled over into other investment plans and bequeathed entirely to heirs, whereas just a maximum 55 percent of retiree pay can go to surviving spouses; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will work with Congress to increase the government’s TSP contribution to a total of 6 percent beginning in Year 3 of service, and extend the match throughout an individual’s military career. (Approved)

Resolution No. 410 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MST INCIDENT REPORTING AND TREATMENT

WHEREAS, the Defense Department’s annual report on Sexual Assault in the Military Services indicated that 5,983 service members reported being sexual assaulted in fiscal year 2014. The Department of Veterans Affairs reported, as of October 2014, that 25 percent of female veterans and 1 percent of male veterans responded “yes,” that they experienced a Military Sexual Trauma (MST), when screened by their VA provider; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of MST victims do not come forward while on active duty due to embarrassment, lack of command action when they do file reports, or for fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include real or perceived “red flags” in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD’s “Zero Tolerance” campaign has made great strides to encourage prevention efforts and tighten field reporting and managerial oversight, to include providing restricted and unrestricted options for reporting a sexual assault. DOD has begun keeping records that provide

evidentiary support of the assault and its effect on service members, and has taken steps to improve the actions of first responders, as well as to provide confidential counseling and other specialized treatments. Yet many MST victims are not aware of such services, which could help alleviate mental health issues commonly associated with sexual assault; and

WHEREAS, although the VA does not require MST victims to have first reported an incident or to have a VA disability rating before receiving treatment, more can still be done inside DOD with regards to prevention, treatment and reporting; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge DOD to continue strengthening its “Zero Tolerance” campaign by encouraging all MST victims to report their attacks, to provide victims with proper medical and mental health care, and to aggressively investigate every reported incident and punish attackers as appropriate. (Approved)

Resolution No. 411 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP MANDATE

WHEREAS, Congress has mandated Transition Assistance Program (TAP) pre-separation counseling for all service members in order to ease the difficult transition from active duty into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, advice on available educational and healthcare programs, and other earned benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has implemented a new TAP curriculum for separating service members, but does not require them to participate in classroom instruction for the individual tracks for Career Vocational Training, Accessing Higher Education, or Entrepreneurship; and

WHEREAS, recent VFW survey data shows that over half of all veterans who receive assistance through our Benefits Delivery at Discharge program reported that they did not have an opportunity to participate in any of the voluntary transition tracks; and

WHEREAS, former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel issued guidance to installation commanders to accommodate nationally-accredited Veterans’ Service Organizations to provide pre-separation services to transitioning service members, but local transition program staff do not

consistently afford VSOs with the opportunity to actively engage service members during scheduled TAP classes; and

WHEREAS, although DOD and the Department of Labor worked to make TAP resources available to veterans via a public-facing website, transitioning service members lose their access to TAP classroom instruction and supplemental TAP resources once they separate or retire, which is when they may need those resources the most; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Defense to include the additional curriculum tracks in its mandatory pre-separation classroom counseling, and to ensure nationally-accredited Veterans' Service Organizations are afforded consistent access to transitioning service members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we request Congress to require DOD and its partner agencies to periodically update their TAP information and procedures to maintain program relevancy, and to expand access to TAP resources for veterans after separating from the military. (Approved)

Resolution No. 412 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE DD-214s TO ALL RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

WHEREAS, virtually all veterans are eligible for VA medical care, as well as compensation and pension, if a service-connected wound, illness or injury occurred while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, eligibility for other VA benefits is based on presenting proof of active military service in the form of a DD Form 214. According to Title 10, U.S. Code, a member of the Guard or Reserve can only receive a DD-214 if they serve 90 days of continuous active duty, although Service Secretaries have the authority to issue the forms for shorter time periods; and

WHEREAS, the Guard and Reserve contributed a quarter of all ground forces deployed into Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 13 years, and half of all Air Force airlift, yet similar to the active force, not every Reserve Component member had the opportunity to deploy much less be activated for 90 consecutive days; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to delete the 90-day activation requirement in Title 10, U.S. Code, and provide the DD Form 214 to all Reserve Component members who separate or retire under conditions other than dishonorable. (Approved)

Resolution No. 413 (Submitted by Commander-in Chief)

CORRECT RESERVE COMPONENT EARLY RETIREMENT PAY PROVISIONS

WHEREAS, America's reliance on its Reserve Component (RC) has been unprecedented in our nation's history. According to the Defense Department, more than 900,000 RC members have served on active duty since 9/11, with a third of them serving multiple tours; and

WHEREAS, RC retirees are normally eligible to receive military retirement pay at age 60, but in an effort to recognize their service, the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) allowed National Guard and Reserve members to lower their retirement pay eligibility age by three months for every 90 days served on active duty after Jan. 29, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the provision did not, however, extend early retirement credit to hundreds of thousands who were activated prior to the implementation date, nor did it include a carryover clause, which meant the credit was only awarded if the minimum 90-day activation period occurred within the same fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the FY 2015 NDAA amends the earlier language by including a carryover clause for RC members activated after Sept. 30, 2014, but the new law did not extend the carryover provision back to Jan. 29, 2008, or grandfather any early retirement credits back to 9/11. This inequity discounts the dedication and sacrifice of our Reserve Component members serving at home and abroad; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to grandfather all early retirement credits to all Reserve Component members who were activated in support of a contingency operation from 9/11 forward. (Approved)

Resolution No. 414 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROVIDE FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY
AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries; and

WHEREAS, the 10-year phase-in period ended in 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and 50 percent or higher VA disability ratings no longer have their military retirement pay offset by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the law, however, did not provide the same equity to service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or to Chapter 61 retirees who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation for the full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of rating percentage. (Approved)

Resolution No. 415 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE TRICARE FEE CHANGES

WHEREAS, the Pentagon's FY 2017 budget submission demolishes and replaces two existing Tricare programs for working age military retirees at tremendously more cost. Also proposed is an annual enrollment fee for Tricare for Life (TFL) beneficiaries where currently there is none; and

WHEREAS, Tricare Prime would be renamed Tricare Select, with annual enrollment fees increasing 25 percent for both single and family rates, and increased copayments of up to \$100 for network providers, plus a cost-share of up to 25 percent for non-network providers after a deductible is met; and

WHEREAS, Tricare Standard/Extra has no current enrollment fee but comes with greater out-of-pocket costs. It would be renamed Tricare Choice, and along with new annual enrollment fees of \$450 (single) and \$900 (family) would be higher out-of-pocket costs, with copays of up to \$100 for

network providers, plus a cost-share of up to 25 percent for non-network providers after a deductible is met; and

WHEREAS, all retirees age 65 and older enrolled in Tricare for Life must first enroll in Medicare Part B, which has mandatory payments based on a household's gross income, the lowest of which is currently \$121.80 a month per person. The Pentagon plan creates a TFL enrollment fee for retirees in the rank of O-6 and below of 0.25 percent of gross retired pay in FY 2017, increasing to 1 percent by FY 2020, and retirees in the rank of O-7 and above would pay a \$100 enrollment fee in FY 2017, increasing to \$400 in FY 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Pentagon proposal does maximize the use of Military Treatment Facilities as a provider of choice, and incentivizes all beneficiaries to use the Tricare prescription home delivery program. There is no charge for active-duty service members, and medically-retired members and their families and survivors are treated the same as active-duty families members, with no participation fees and lower cost shares; and

WHEREAS, current law, however, links any Tricare enrollment fee increase to annual Cost-of-Living Adjustments, as determined by the Consumer Price Index. Military retirees saw no COLA increase in their January 2016 paychecks, and no projection validates the Pentagon's proposed increases for FY 2017 or beyond. Military health coverage is expensive, yet so is the upfront personal investment someone makes to voluntarily commit to a full military career. Any real or perceived erosion of benefits for career-minded personnel will undermine long-term retention; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose all Tricare fee increases and the dismantlement and renaming of Tricare Prime and Standard/Extra just to circumvent the current law. DOD should reform its healthcare programs by eliminating institutional inefficiencies before promising military retirees that better service will ensue after their participation fees are increased. (Approved)

Resolution No. 416 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REVISE UNFAVORABLE DISCHARGE REVIEW PROCEDURES

WHEREAS, approximately 30,000 veterans have been administratively discharged from the military for adjustment or personality disorders since September 11, 2001, and according to the Army Human Resources Command, the number of misconduct discharges continues to increase; and

WHEREAS, discharges under other-than-honorable conditions often disqualifies veterans from Department of Veterans Affairs health, compensation and education benefits, and could render them undesirable to potential employers; and

WHEREAS, many veterans who received unfavorable discharges could have been suffering from the effects of undiagnosed and untreated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries and Military Sexual Trauma as the result of their military service; and

WHEREAS, a 2014 Department of Defense decision opened an avenue for Vietnam veterans and those from other wars, conflicts and eras to request upgrades to their other-than-honorable military discharge due to an extenuating factor not known at the time of their separation: PTSD. The decision is not a blanket approval for every upgrade request, but it does allow veterans who may have been diagnosed with PTSD years after separation to submit new evidence and hopefully correct a past injustice; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a process by which Military Department Boards for Correction of Military/Naval Records will presume administrative irregularity and place the burden of proof on DOD to show that the discharge was just for those cases where the veteran claims service-related PTSD, TBI or MST as a mitigating factor in requesting an upgrade to his or her military discharge. (Approved)

Resolution No. 417 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REPEAL SBP/DIC OFFSET

WHEREAS, surviving spouses of retired military members who die from service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries are entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, if a military retiree was also enrolled in the Defense Department's Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP), the surviving spouse's SBP benefit would have a dollar-for-dollar offset by the amount of DIC benefits; and

WHEREAS, similar to life insurance, SBP is purchased by a military retiree and is intended to provide up to 55 percent of his/her retirement pay to a surviving spouse. DIC is a modest indemnity compensation benefit of \$1,254 per month that the VA pays to surviving spouses whose loved ones died from a service-connected wound, illness or injury. Despite the two payments being paid for two different reasons from two different federal departments, all

monthly SBP retirement payments are first offset by the \$1,254 DIC payment; and

WHEREAS, with few exceptions, the surviving spouses of other federal program retirees have no offset penalty, whereas approximately 63,000 surviving military spouses are affected by this aptly termed “Widow’s Tax.” Congress recognized the offset as unfair and in the FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act created a Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance to partially reduce some of the offset via a graduated monthly payment of up to \$310, but funding is only authorized through FY 2017; and

WHEREAS, military retiree SBP payments currently range between 2.5 and 6.5 percent of the selected base amount. A recommendation by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission would offer a new SBP program with substantially higher (11.25 percent) monthly premiums in order to receive full DIC without offset; and

WHEREAS, while the VFW concurs with the Commission’s goal to eliminate the offset, we disagree with its funding method. The VFW’s position is for the full repeal of the SBP-DIC offset, not to subsidize it out of the pockets of military retirees, who on the top end already sacrifice 6.5 percent of their monthly pay—for 360 consecutive months and reached the age of 70—just to ensure their surviving spouses will receive 55 percent of their retirement pay; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to repeal the Survivor’s Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset. (Approved)

Resolution No. 418 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

REFORM THE UNIFORMED SERVICES
FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

WHEREAS, in 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *McCarty* vs. *McCarty* that military retirement pay is not divisible as community property in divorce proceedings. However, in 1982, Congress adopted the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) to circumvent the Supreme Court’s decision, thereby allowing military retirement pay to be divided in divorce settlements; and

WHEREAS, thousands of military retirees are now under court-ordered garnishment because state courts have ruled military pay to be a

property asset, causing military retirees to pay a court-ordered percentage of their retirement pay to former spouses regardless of fault, merit or need, and regardless of whether the former spouse remarries; and

WHEREAS, certain inequities exist in the USFSPA, including the “windfall provision,” which grants divorce awards based upon the pay on the date of retirement not on the date of divorce, as well as a provision that requires service members with more than 20 years of service to divide their expected retired pay before their actual retirement date; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress to reform the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act by basing the award amount on the service member’s rank at the time of divorce, not expected rank upon retirement; to not require service members with more than 20 years of service to divide expected retired pay before they actually retire; and to terminate payments if the former spouse remarries. (Approved)

Resolution No. 419 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and instead established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in an attempt to help maintain peace, security and stability in the Western Pacific. This loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale of state-of-the-art

military equipment, weapons and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to provide the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State. (Approved)

Resolution No. 420 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the Northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, South Korea's immediate neighbor, however, continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea; and

WHEREAS, North Korea's "supreme leader," the European-educated Kim Jong-un, has expanded upon the same aggressive path established by his father and grandfather. He purged his inner counsel of three defense ministers and four army chiefs of staff—the most prominent of whom was his uncle—and replaced them with officers more loyal to him; and

WHEREAS, North Korea continues to escalate tensions in the region by test launching potentially nuclear-capable missiles and conducting four underground nuclear explosions since 2006. It is a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries unfriendly to the United States, most notably Iran, and it periodically deploys its armed forces along the demilitarized zone and the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom; and

WHEREAS, the continued unpredictability of North Korea makes the presence of U.S. ground and air forces inside South Korea even more critical as a deterrent to aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Government to maintain a substantial military

presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance though modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region. (Approved)

Resolution No. 421 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT THE STATE OF ISRAEL

WHEREAS, the State of Israel is a historic, democratic ally of the United States of America, and a key link in the defense of democratic principles in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, Israel is surrounded by active enemies, to include Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which has fired more than 15,000 short-range rockets into mostly civilian towns and villages over the past 10 years; Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, which continues to infiltrate Israel through underground tunnels; and Iranian influences on the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, which continues to escalate tensions through indiscriminate small arms and car bomb attacks. The total impact of Syria's civil war and the spillover of its fight with the Islamic State is still to be determined; and

WHEREAS, Iran is one of America's and Israel's foremost enemies, and continues to be one of the most serious threats to regional stability due to its conventional military forces, ballistic missiles, nuclear research and proliferation, and as an exporter of terrorism; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Government to continue to support the State of Israel through the sale of advanced weaponry and technology to help them maintain an adequate defense capability in order to survive as a nation. (Approved)

Resolution No. 422 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of 83,000 missing Americans that include approximately 73,500 from World War II, 7,800 from the Korean War, 1,600 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 6 post-Vietnam that include Operations Eldorado Canyon (1), Desert Storm (2) and Iraqi Freedom (3); and

WHEREAS, the merger of the former Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and the Air Force Life Science Equipment Laboratory, into the new Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has produced the unity of command necessary to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing and unaccounted-for Americans; and

WHEREAS, the opening of new DPAA laboratories in Hawaii and Nebraska will lead to the identification of more missing servicemen, some of whom were buried as unknowns in our nation's cemeteries at home and abroad. New public-private partnerships are expanding the overall mission's ability to be at more sites, as is increasing the number of DPAA field offices into areas closer to major battlefields; and

WHEREAS, DPAA has strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, which will be necessary should additional funding be required to support recovery operations in North Korea, which have been interrupted since 2005 due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that DPAA remain fully funded. Recovering fallen Americans from long-ago battlefields is demanding and often dangerous work for investigation and recovery teams, but it is the most sacred of missions. It is our government's fulfillment of a soldier's pledge to never leave a fallen comrade on the battlefield, which is a promise that spans all generations; and

WHEREAS, without full and reliable funding, DPAA could be forced to postpone or cancel difficult recovery sites in favor of potentially more productive locations, such as mass burials or multi-crewman aircraft crashes. Full funding enables DPAA to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish its worldwide mission to recover, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from all wars and conflicts; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to fully fund the requested amounts for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting organizations involved in the Full Accounting Mission. (Approved)

Resolution No. 423 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CALL FOR MORE UNILATERAL POW/MIA ACTIONS BY VIETNAM

WHEREAS, 2,583 Americans were listed as missing and unaccounted-for at the end of the Vietnam War. As of February 2016, the

number of missing is nearing 1,600 due to a combination of increased U.S. Government emphasis, better research and identification technology, stronger diplomatic ties with host governments, and access to aircraft crash and ground battlefield sites; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam had a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remains, and according to the National League of POW/MIA Families, this unilateral effort enabled the Vietnamese to locate and return remains to U.S. custody along with records that continue to offer significant potential; and

WHEREAS, onsite joint field operations are also achieving increased results. The process now includes both U.S.-led Joint Excavation Teams and Vietnamese-led Recovery Teams that are assisted by fewer Americans who are experts in their fields of forensic science, EOD and medical. This formula allows a greater number of teams to “increase the pace and scope of field operations,” as requested by Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, increased military-to-military relations is also benefiting the Full Accounting Mission. U.S. Navy assets are increasingly allowed to participate in underwater survey and recovery operations, which has long been advocated for by the VFW; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to continue to expand the number and frequency of Vietnamese-led recovery operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we urge Vietnam to continue to authorize its officials to locate and release immediately to the United States all records relating to Americans missing from the Vietnam War, and to urge the Vietnamese people to turn over the remains of Americans or information on American burial sites, as well as any reports of live American servicemen. (Approved)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE AT THE
117TH NATIONAL CONVENTION, CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Resolution No. 601 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

WHEREAS, there are about 21.4 million living veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 2.4 million men and women have served in combat in support of the Global War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, VA anticipates that enrollment in the Veterans Health Administration will grow to nearly 9.5 million veterans; and

WHEREAS, more than 8.76 million of those veterans will be seen by VA for health care services; and

WHEREAS, even though appropriations for VA continue to increase, they have not kept pace with demand and the rate of inflation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress of the United States authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which fully fund and maintain the integrity and enhancement of veteran entitlement programs and health care system. (Approved)

Resolution No. 602 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

OPPOSE VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENT INCREASES

WHEREAS, veterans, other than those with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, those who are receiving medications for their service-connected conditions or those whose incomes fall below the nonservice-connected pension threshold, must pay a co-payment for each 30-day supply of medications obtained through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, there have been repeated proposals to change the pharmaceutical co-payment, placing an undue hardship on many veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the VA proposes to amend its current copayment regulations in favor of a tiered medication copayment structure with a target date of calendar year 2017 that will raise the pharmaceutical co-payment from \$9 for each 30 day supply for priority groups 7 and 8 up to \$11 per medication; and

WHEREAS, the increase in costs of the benefit would likely cause many veterans to turn away from the VA health care system and would serve to inequitably balance the federal budget through veterans programs; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals are part of the VA's standard health benefits package and must be provided to all eligible veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment.
(Approved)

Resolution No. 603 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

COMPETITIVE REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR
VA AND DOD HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the reimbursement private sector health care providers receive from VA's CHAMPVA health care program is less than the reimbursements paid by private health insurance; and

WHEREAS, the reimbursement private sector health care providers receive from the Veteran Choice Program is tied by law to Medicare's allowable charges; and

WHEREAS, the reimbursement private sector health care providers receive from the TRICARE is tied by law to Medicare's allowable charges; and

WHEREAS, private medical providers have elected not to participate in CHAMPVA, the Veterans Choice Program, and TRICARE networks because of the limited reimbursement rates; and

WHEREAS, 100 percent disabled veterans and retired military personnel rely on VA and DOD health care programs for their health care needs, and limited reimbursement rates prevent veterans and their dependents from accessing medical treatment and care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation and regulations authorizing reimbursement rates for VA and DOD health care programs and other programs, which provide

medical care for retired and disabled veterans to be competitive with private health insurance. (Approved)

Resolution No. 604 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA MEDICARE and TRICARE REIMBURSEMENT

WHEREAS, the VFW views it as essential that the VA health care system provide qualifying veterans with timely and accessible care; and

WHEREAS, VA collects third party payment for treatment, but current law prevents VA from collecting from the Medicare Trust Fund and TRICARE in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, a large number of VA's patients are eligible for Medicare and TRICARE; and

WHEREAS, VA medical care collections are used to supplement the appropriations VA receives from Congress to deliver efficient and effective health care at a lower cost than private sector health care providers; and

WHEREAS, with the increased demand on it health care system, it is now absolutely essential that VA be authorized to collect federal dollars to supplement its annual appropriations to ensure adequate funding for the Veterans Health Administration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support enactment into law of legislation authorizing VA to receive reimbursement for the cost of non-service connected care that is provided to veterans who are enrolled in Medicare or TRICARE. (Approved)

Resolution No. 605 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

CONSIDER TREATMENT FOR A PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED CONDITION AS A CLAIM FOR VA COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, many service members have suffered from diseases that are recognized to be presumptive; and

WHEREAS, veterans suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases may not be aware that they may be eligible for service connection, even if they are being treated in a VA facility; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical facilities are not currently staffed or equipped to provide appropriate counseling to veterans or their families on how to file a claim for service connected benefits; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation requiring that treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for a condition or disease recognized as presumptively service connected will be considered to be an informal claim for service connection for compensation purposes. (Approved)

Resolution No. 606 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTENDING GULF WAR PRESUMPTIONS AND HEALTH CARE BEYOND 2016 AND
TO AFGHANISTAN THEATER VETERANS

WHEREAS, many service members have served and continue to serve in the Afghanistan theater of operations since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, these veterans have served under circumstances similar to those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and the first Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Afghanistan was not considered part of the Southwest Asia theater of operations during Operation Desert Storm and VA did not include Afghanistan in the Southwest Asia theater of operations after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, veterans of Afghanistan are suffering from similar undiagnosed conditions as those who have served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations; and

WHEREAS, the authority to extend presumptions to all Southwest Asia theater veterans is set to expire on December 31, 2016, although American service members to continue to serve in the area of operations; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA must support research to verify whether service members who served in Afghanistan are subjected to the same

environmental hazards as those who served in Iraq, so that appropriate benefits, including eligibility for compensation based on undiagnosed illnesses, and medical care eligibility, will be provided retroactive to the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that while research is ongoing, allow veterans who served in the Afghanistan theater of operations access to the Gulf War Registry Health Exam; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must extend the authority for presumption beyond December 31, 2016 to ensure that all service members who continue to serve in Southwest Asia are afforded this protection.
(Approved)

Resolution No. 607 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

NURSING HOME ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has called upon Congress to enact legislation to regulate and expand eligibility for VA health care and provide all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care services which include nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, current VA regulations extend VA eligibility for nursing home care to those veterans who are service-connected at 70 percent or above or those seeking nursing home care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, the demand for VA nursing home care is increasing as the veteran population continues to age; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care units are VA hospital-based and provide an intensive and extensive level of nursing home care supported by the clinical specialties and other services within the host hospital; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care is considered the “safety net” for VA outpatient services such as residential care, respite care, hospital-based home care, adult day health care, homemaker/home health aid services and other extended care programs; and

WHEREAS, VA, through their own statements, recognizes the difference in eligibility for nursing home care and inpatient hospital care as inconsistent with the principles of sound medical practice, which support continuity of care for veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard VA nursing home entitlement for all veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 608 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, since 2000, more than 330,000 service members have sustained Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) including those who served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, veterans with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI which often goes unrecognized; and

WHEREAS, even mildly injured TBI patients may have long-term mental and physical health consequences; and

WHEREAS, veterans with severe TBI require a lifetime of intensive services to care for their injuries, yet many VA medical facilities are neither properly staffed nor equipped to provide the necessary screening and comprehensive health care services veterans suffering from TBI require; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from conditions associated with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve research pertaining to screening methods, diagnostic tools, and treatment of conditions associated with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI to ensure veterans who have experienced a TBI receive effective health care. (Approved as Amended)

Resolution No. 609 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

PTSD AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated that treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and providing Mental Health Care among returning war veterans is one of its highest priorities, and the VA operates a nationwide network of nearly 200 specialized PTSD outpatient treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the early and accurate screening, diagnosis and treatment for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other mental health disorders, yields optimal patient outcomes, and statistics have shown that these conditions, left untreated or poorly treated, can lead to increases in suicide attempts or suicides among a host of other negative consequences; and

WHEREAS, a total of 405,915 Iraq, and Afghanistan Veterans were seen for potential PTSD at VA facilities following their return from these overseas deployments as of March 31, 2015; and

WHEREAS, VA expects an increase in PTSD conditions as Veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan after multiple tours of duty; and

WHEREAS, available research has not sufficiently evaluated the clinical effectiveness of treatment programs for veterans diagnosed with and/or suffering from the effects of traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, and adequate research into the brain's response to internal and external influences that could result in mental illness has yet to be undertaken; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to adequately staff VA mental health treatment and research programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to dedicate adequate resources to address the alarming rate at which Veterans commit suicide. (Approved)

Resolution No. 610 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, more than 447,000 women veterans received VA health care in 2015, which is a 123 percent increase from 2013, and female veterans are higher users of primary and mental health services than their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, VA estimated that women veterans as a percentage of veterans using VA health care will continue to grow, making it essential that VA continue to staff and equip its medical facilities to meet their specific health care needs; and

WHEREAS, women veterans have reported that VA staff continue to confuse them for spouses or caregivers and even challenge their veteran status; and

WHEREAS, women veterans also reported concerns regarding the gender specific competencies of VA health care professionals; and

WHEREAS, VA reported that 66 percent of women veterans are assigned to a Designated Women's Health Primary Care Provider (DWHP), who have experience and training in women's health care; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we acknowledge VA has improved the care and services it provides women veterans, but we urge VA to continue to monitor and enhance health care services available to women veterans at all VA medical facilities and expand its designated women's health program to mental health care to ensure veterans have access to mental health care providers who understand women-specific mental health conditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach to older women veterans, allow women to choose the gender of their VA health care providers and properly train VA's workforce to treat women veterans with the respect and dignity they have earned and deserve. (Approved)

Resolution No. 611 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXPAND VA CAREGIVER BENEFITS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program provides a monthly stipend, respite care, mental and medical health care, and necessary training and certifications for caregivers of veterans who were severely injured on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, no such comprehensive program exists for the caregivers of veterans of other eras; and

WHEREAS, the VFW believes that severely disabled veterans of all conflicts have made incredible sacrifices, and all family members who care for them are equally deserving of our recognition and support; and

WHEREAS, it is arbitrary and unjust that veterans who were severely disabled prior to September 11, 2001 are ineligible for the Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense provides support to family caregivers of members of the armed forces who are catastrophically disabled through its Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (SCAADL) program, which includes disability caused by illnesses in its eligibility criteria; and

WHEREAS, the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program excludes veterans who require home caregiver services as a result of serious illnesses; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to expand eligibility for the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program to include veterans of all eras; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to fully align the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program with the DOD SCAADL program by including in its eligibility criteria veterans who require caregiver services as a result of serious illnesses incurred in the line of duty. (Approved)

Resolution No. 612 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUSTAINABLE NON-VA HEALTH CARE OPTIONS FOR VETERANS

WHEREAS, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States are generally satisfied with the health care they receive from VA and believe the VA health care system must be improved to ensure all veterans have timely access to high quality care, but oppose privatizing their health care system or limiting VA's ability to provide veterans a full continuum of care; and

WHEREAS, the VFW has collected and evaluated direct feedback from veterans regarding their options, preferences and expectation when receiving health care; and

WHEREAS, the VFW has consistently worked with Congress and VA to improve the health care VA provides our nation's veterans through innovative programs like the Veterans Choice Program to ensure veterans have a seamless experience receiving health care from VA, whether it is at VA medical facilities or through private sector health care providers; and

WHEREAS, VA and Congress have indicated that they intend to reform VA community care programs to expand access to private sector providers for veterans who use the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, the veteran population is a shifting demographic with evolving health care needs, which necessitates that VA identify new and innovative ways to deliver timely access to high quality, comprehensive, and veteran-centric health care to the veterans it serves; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the VFW, that Congress must establish a single, sustainable and veteran-centric community care program that expands VA's community care authorities and ensures veterans are able to receive the timely, high quality, comprehensive, and veteran-centric health care they have earned and deserve; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA comply with federal prompt payment requirements and incentivize private sector health care providers to participate in its community care program, while ensuring veterans are not held financially liable for services furnished through such program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must remain the guarantor and coordinator of care for enrolled veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must continue to provide veterans a full continuum of care at VA medical facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress and VA must furnish and conduct proper outreach to ensure veterans are fully aware of their health care options. (Approved)

Resolution No. 613 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

EXTEND SERVICE CONNECTION PRESUMPTION TO BLAST SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terrorism has placed tens of thousands of service members in harm's way; and

WHEREAS, the nature of the conflict these men and women face is frequently guerrilla-style combat where the enemy is widely known to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs); and

WHEREAS, much of the attention has been focused on the apparent physical wounds, there are many unseen effects of blast trauma, which could include brain injuries, long-term hearing and balance issues, chronic pain, air embolisms, and injuries mistaken for personality disorders; and

WHEREAS, some effects associated with blast injuries may not become manifest immediately allowing the service member to return to the field, only to have their ability to fulfill their duty dramatically affected by the long-term effects of the blast; and

WHEREAS many injuries are difficult to diagnose and our men and women in uniform can suffer from these disabilities for many years after the blast; and

WHEREAS, a large number of veterans have been identified as having been diagnosed with conditions possibly related to blast exposures at VA medical centers since the start of the Global War on Terrorism; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for conditions associated with blast exposure. (Approved)

Resolution No. 614 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g. member of a gun crew on board Navy ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incidence rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, many pre-service and discharge examinations, particularly for World War II and Korean Conflict veterans, were usually accomplished with the highly inaccurate whispered-voice test; and

WHEREAS, veterans, in those cases, were not afforded a comprehensive audio logical examination upon entrance and discharge from the military services; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by VA was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during their military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, “after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss...” Given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma. (Approved)

Resolution No. 615 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HEARING LOSS COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat have a high incident rate of hearing loss usually associated with acoustical trauma; and

WHEREAS, in the practice of granting disability compensation there is a long-standing precedent that ratings not be offset by the function artificially restored by prosthesis; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related diseases or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have incurred extreme hardships through undocumented acoustic trauma related to combat service or occupational duty; and

WHEREAS, hearing aids are considered a prosthetic device necessary for good quality of life; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved)

Resolution No. 616 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VA CLAIMS WORKLOAD

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a workload of 1.6 million claims for compensation, pension, education benefits and appeals; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of claims, the need for compliance to Court of Veterans Appeals decisions claims, and the continued increase in the number of claims received each year the workload has remained unacceptably high; and

WHEREAS, because of substantial number of claims and appeals cases, 23.3 percent of rating cases have been pending for more than 125 days and take, on average, 128 days to complete. Appeals have increased to over 346,000 and pend, on average, over 1,000 days at a regional office before being shipped to the Board of Veterans Appeals; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to order unnecessary examinations even when claimants submit adequate medical records and doctors opinions; and

WHEREAS, decades of staffing shortages and neglect within VA contributed to current backlogs and decreased timeliness; and

WHEREAS, Congress in recent years has provided increased funding for staffing at VA and improved oversight. Yet, the attrition of new hires and retirement of journeymen claims processors continues to challenge VA's ability to train and maintain a technically proficient workforce; and

WHEREAS, after decades of study, Congressional hearings, changes of VA leadership, altered workflow, amended work processes, sporadic IT development as well as countless pilot programs and experimental initiatives, it is clear that there are no easy, simple or quick solutions that lead to the rapid reduction of the backlog; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress require VA to accept private medical evidence and opinions in lieu of VA examinations whenever it is sufficient for rating purposes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to continue to exercise its oversight capacity and provide the resources necessary to hire, train and sustain a workforce sufficient to overcome the workload and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress continues its oversight of VA IT initiatives to ensure that they are constructive, relevant and effective in streamlining claims processing and improving quality of entitlement decisions. (Approved)

Resolution No. 617 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

IMPROVE EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA) provides educational support to eligible dependents (spouse or children) of a service member who died on active duty or a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, while DEA benefits increase annually, they fail to increase at the same rate as tuition; and

WHEREAS, according to the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, the average cost of attendance, including tuition, fees, and room and board, at a four-year public university is consistently more than twice the rate of reimbursement for DEA; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. worked with Congress to successfully expand the Gunnery Sgt. John David Fry Scholarship to offer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to eligible surviving children, and spouses; and

WHEREAS, while nothing can repay the enormity of the loss and sacrifice of military survivors, providing a quality educational benefit will provide them the opportunity to build a meaningful and productive future for themselves and their children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to increase DEA benefits to reflect the rising cost of education, with future increases indexed to reflect the average cost of attendance as reported by the Department of Education. (Approved)

Resolution No. 618 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pays certain burial benefits at the death of a veteran who dies from a service connected disability. VA pays a different burial benefit and plot allowance on behalf of a wartime veteran who dies from a non-service connected condition; and

WHEREAS, the cost of funeral expenses in the private sector have increased nearly seven times over since 2001 and the current VA benefit is \$2,000 for a service connected death, and \$700 burial and \$700 plot allowance for a qualifying non-service connected death; well below the cost in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Congress should provide the resources to meet the changing needs of burial benefits and bring burial allowances and plot allowances to the same proportionate level they were when the benefits were joined in 1973; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress increase all burial benefits to what the *Independent Budget* recommends: the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those veterans who do not have access to a state or national veterans cemetery should be increased to \$6,160, \$1,918, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the service connected burial benefit, non-service connected burial benefit and the plot allowance for those veterans who have access to a state or national veterans cemetery but chose burial in a private cemetery should be increased to \$2,793, \$854, and \$1,150 respectively; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should provide the resources required to meet burial needs of all veterans who have served their country so honorably and faithfully. (Approved)

Resolution No. 619 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

TOXIC EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, veterans who served on the ground and inland waterways during the Vietnam War are granted presumptive service connection for conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure, yet Blue Water Navy veterans are still arbitrarily and unjustly denied such presumption; and

WHEREAS, veterans who served along the Korean demilitarized zone before and after the April 1968 to August 1971 dates of presumptive exposure to Agent Orange suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure and are often denied service connection by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, many veterans who served on bases in Thailand during the Vietnam era who suffer from conditions associated with Agent Orange are arbitrarily and unjustly denied service connection; and

WHEREAS, more than 200,000 veterans of the Persian Gulf War suffer from an array of conditions and diseases, collectively known as Gulf War illness, while the causes remain unexplained and effective treatments undetermined; and

WHEREAS, veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were exposed to numerous environmental hazards, including open air burn pits and the anti-malaria drug mefloquine, the full effects of which are still unknown; and

WHEREAS, for decades, veterans and dependents stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama were exposed to soil, air and drinking water contaminated by Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB), and now suffer from conditions associated with PCB exposure; and

WHEREAS, from 1953 to 1987, an untold number of Marines and their dependents were exposed to toxic drinking water while stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the full effects of which are still unknown; and

WHEREAS, the effects of toxic exposures on the descendants of veterans remains largely unknown; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to invest adequate resources to study, diagnose, and treat conditions and illnesses associated with toxic exposures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensures that the Department of Veterans Affairs extends presumptive service connection to veterans suffering from any conditions or illnesses found to be associated with exposure to toxic substances in the line of duty. (Approved)

Resolution No. 620 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

MARKER MEDALLION

WHEREAS, Public Law 110-157, signed into law on December 26, 2007 gives the VA authority to “furnish, upon request”, a medallion or other device of a design determined by the Secretary, to signify the deceased’s status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker that was furnished at private expense; and

WHEREAS, veterans who died prior to November 1, 1990 are not eligible to have this medallion or other device provided; and

WHEREAS, family headstones or monuments often do not necessarily commemorate the veteran’s military service; and

WHEREAS, many of our honored deceased veterans now lie in their final resting place without lasting testimony by our government of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, we believe this injustice to our Nation’s veterans must be corrected; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support amending Public Law 110-157 to require the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a medallion or other device notwithstanding the fact that they died prior to November 1, 1990. (Approved)

Resolution No. 621 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

HOMELESS VETERANS PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, homelessness among veterans has significantly decreased due to coordinated efforts across multiple agencies of government and the ambitious goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs to eliminate homelessness among veterans; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of female veterans experience homelessness, many of whom have dependents in their care; and

WHEREAS, the definition for homelessness under Title 42 includes those fleeing domestic violence, but the definition under Title 38 includes no specific protection for those fleeing domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, local and state homeless veteran agencies and programs are federally funded by the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Grant and Per Diem program and the Department of Labor (DOL) Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

WHEREAS, programs such as VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the joint Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program are showing signs of success in reducing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the VA acknowledges its obligation to maintain comprehensive assistance to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to the best of its capabilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress ensure that Title 38 offers proper protection to homeless veterans fleeing domestic violence, and continue to address veterans' homelessness by increasing the availability of affordable housing, expanding educational and employment opportunities and training and providing gender-specific services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA should periodically adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates for inflation to ensure sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA compensation and non-service connected pension should not be considered countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in determining program eligibility. (Approved)

Resolution No. 622 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

ENSURE VETERAN SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, our nation has consistently supported the future success of our warfighters through robust veterans' education benefits, historically molding generations of proven leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has worked to secure and preserve quality education benefits for all generations of veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA enrolled nearly one million veterans across all G.I. Bill programs in the past academic year; and

WHEREAS, despite significant improvements to consumer resources for student veterans, inconsistent access to quality consumer information and financial hardships continue to drive perceptions in Washington that student-veterans are not succeeding in higher education; and

WHEREAS, many combat veterans and wounded combat veterans do not fully qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit; and

WHEREAS, certain schools and programs seek to circumvent benefit guidelines in order to reap significant financial benefit; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urge Congress to ensure proper oversight of VA's educational benefit programs by developing quality metrics with which to demonstrate student veteran success in higher education, and close financial loopholes through which certain academic programs can exploit GI Bill reimbursement models; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensure veterans receive equitable access to benefits like in-state tuition and quality pre-enrollment educational information to ensure veterans are academically and financially prepared to succeed in higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States work to extend full GI Bill benefits for all combat veterans and preserve quality GI Bill benefits for all current conflict veterans and future conflict veterans to ensure they have access to quality education assistance programs. (Approved)

Resolution No. 623 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the period of eligibility for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits is 12 years from the date of separation from the military or the date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not understand their eligibility to VR&E services and the benefits of the program until later in life when they become so disabled that their disabilities create an employment barrier; and

WHEREAS, VR&E lacks quality performance measures that measure rehabilitation based on the long-term effects of disability and the likelihood that a disability may require further rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, VR&E can take more than 90 days from enrollment to the start of services; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term rehabilitation versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans. (Approved)

Resolution No. 624 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

SUPPORT VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes that it is in the best interest of our nation to have a strong and viable veterans employment and training system; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recognized that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated service members find it difficult to obtain meaningful employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment and educational programs in place for veterans such programs must have a proactive, long-term career focus; and

WHEREAS, programs designed to encourage federal employment of veterans, assist veterans in finding employment in their communities, and encourage federal contractors to hire veterans demand reasonable funding and responsible oversight to ensure success; and

WHEREAS, state agencies who receive federal funding are not held to the same veteran hiring standards as the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program and other Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to improve and enforce federal veteran-hiring mandates for contractors who do business with the federal government as outlined in Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal veteran hiring initiatives and programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and funding should be adjusted to reflect abilities in creating long-term meaningful careers for veterans, and state agencies that receive federal funding must be held to the same standards and report to Congress on the success of veteran hiring initiatives. (Approved)

Resolution No. 625 (Submitted by Commander-in-Chief)

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, government reports consistently indicate that many federal agencies fail to reach their three-percent contracting goal for disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans and disabled veterans lack access to the necessary capital to invest in small business opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to deliver adequate tools to veterans, offering the opportunity to fulfill the three-percent federal contracting mandate; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration remains underfunded and understaffed to fulfill its mission of establishing and maintaining robust veterans' programs; and

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking programs for veterans via veterans small business centers and other entrepreneurship programs funded through the Small Business Administration in order to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress expand veteran's and disabled veteran's access to capital by expanding direct loan programs through the Small Business Administration in order to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal; but such programs should never come at the expense of other earned veterans' benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Congress hold VA accountable for its duty to properly verify veteran entrepreneurs to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal. (Approved)

Resolution No. 626 (Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas)

EXTEND THE PRESUMPTION OF EXPOSURE TO HERBICIDES TO
VETERANS STATIONED AT ROYAL THAI MILITARY
BASES DURING THE VIETNAM WAR

WHEREAS, it is a well-documented that herbicides were used for vegetation control and to clear base perimeters at Royal Thai installations between 28 February 1961 and 7 May 1975; and

WHEREAS, it is also documented that tactical herbicides obtained from Vietnam, as well as commercial grade herbicides, were used in Thailand; and

WHEREAS, many U.S. military service members stationed at Royal Thai Military installations throughout Thailand are suffering from diseases which include many types of cancer, as well as diabetes and other chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, these diseases are recognized to be presumptive to herbicide exposure; and

WHEREAS, base personnel received military training such as small arms qualification training near the base perimeter; and

WHEREAS, current policy by VA restricting the presumption of exposure to herbicides to only those personnel who were military police and those with specific duties on the perimeter of installations does not recognize that many personnel working at these bases were given adjunct assignments (guard duty) on the perimeter which was poorly documented; and

WHEREAS, military service members with boots on the ground, at any time and point in Vietnam are automatically considered to have been exposed to herbicides; and

WHEREAS, the restrictive policies of VA unfairly exclude personnel who were assigned adjunct duties on the perimeter but cannot prove it; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to enact legislation granting the presumption of exposure to any veteran who was assigned to a Royal Thai military installation from 28 February 1961 and 7 May 1975. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 627 (Submitted by Department of Hawaii)

IMPROVE VA & DOD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR HEPATITIS B

WHEREAS, most individuals with chronic Hepatitis B enjoy good health, are symptom free and may not know they have the silent disease; and

WHEREAS, in developed countries like the U.S. chronic Hepatitis B is a preventable, highly-treatable long-term illness where since 2002, Hepatitis B vaccinations have been required for all incoming U.S. military personnel; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Health & Human Services, in 2011, released our nation's first-ever comprehensive Action Plan for the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Hepatitis B; and

WHEREAS, a 2014 study by the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease concluded that Hepatitis B infection was twice as common in the veteran population as in the general population, and that VA screening for the infection was "suboptimal"; and

WHEREAS, legislation has been consistently introduced in Congress to improve VA Hepatitis B testing and treatment for veterans considered to be at-risk; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has unjustly discharged or denied the reenlistment requests of military service members with Hepatitis B who are on stable treatment plans, do not exhibit symptoms and fit for duty; and

WHEREAS, transparency and accessible documentation are among the best means to educate and prevent stigma and discrimination; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. urges the Department of Veterans Affairs to take steps to improve Hepatitis B screening, follow-up testing and treatment among veterans born between 1945 and 1980; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. urges the Department of Defense to codify policies for retention and discharge of military personnel with chronic Hepatitis B infection in order to educate and ensure Hepatitis B policies are documented, transparent, equitable, and updated as medical capabilities, technologies, evidence-based practices, and DOD policy considerations evolve. (Approved)

Resolution No. 628 (Submitted by Department of Utah)

**PROTECT VETERANS' ABILITY TO USE POST 9/11 GI BILL BENEFITS FOR FLIGHT
TRAINING AND AVIATION DEGREE PROGRAMS**

WHEREAS, many veterans wish and plan to use their hard earned Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits to pursue flight training and aviation degree programs; and

WHEREAS, aviation degree programs have the highest completion and job placement rates within higher education; and

WHEREAS, nearly all veterans who complete these training programs successfully transition into well-paying and meaningful post-service careers as advanced aviation professionals; and

WHEREAS, policy proposals designed to find savings and redirect veterans' benefits money to other federal programs by significantly scaling back veterans' access to aviation degree programs are being considered by Congress; and

WHEREAS, cutting veterans' benefits for flight training and aviation degree programs would make most young veterans unable to afford the costs of the advanced aviation education and training that leads to lucrative careers in aviation; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. strongly opposes a cap or roll-back of veterans' education benefits with regard to flight training and aviation degree programs. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 629 (Submitted by Department of Minnesota)

SUPPORT LEGISLATION COMPELLING THE NATIONAL CEMETERY
ADMINISTRATION TO PLACE SPOUSE VITAL DATES ON VETERANS GRAVE
MARKERS PLACED IN PRIVATE CEMETERIES

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration has previously included a spouse name and vital dates on a veteran's grave stone marker which is placed in private cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration currently includes a spouses name and vital dates on a Veterans grave stone marker placed in a National State cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration has no "legal authority" to issue such marker with spousal vital dates in private cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration now inscribes: "Husband of, or Wife of, or Spouse of" on a veteran's grave marker placed in private cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery Administration continues to inscribe a spouse vital dates for grave markers at National State Veterans Cemeteries; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we support Federal Legislation that will compel the National Cemetery Administration to include spouse's names and vital dates on a Veterans grave stone marker regardless of the cemetery on which it is placed.
(Approved)

Resolution No. 630 (Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania)

NATIONAL VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS RECOGNITION AND DEPARTMENT
ASSIGNMENT OF A VETERANS TREATMENT COURT ADVOCATE FOR THE
PROMOTION AND REPORTING OF THE VETERAN COURT PROCESS

WHEREAS, the Veteran Treatment Court program has proven to be an effective process in the rehabilitation and recovery of veterans across the world; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars strives to continue to do the most we can for all veterans; and

WHEREAS, Veteran Treatment Courts are becoming more prevalent across the nation and VFW members are assisting the process as mentors; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we mandate a Department position for the sole purpose of promotion of new Veteran Treatment Courts. The position of "Veterans Treatment Court Advocate" would allow each Department the power to lobby the court system of the state for the promotion of more courts. This process would, therefore, reach out to more veterans suffering from PTSD, TBI, and other war related cases resulting in veterans not getting much needed treatment. Statistics and taxpayer savings related to the program would then be used to confirm and promote the program. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 631 (Submitted by Department of Colorado)

EXTENDING WALDENSTROM SYNDROME AS
A PRESUMPTIVE FOR ALL SERVICES

WHEREAS, Waldenstrom Macroglobulinemia is a rare form of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma; and

WHEREAS, Waldenstrom Syndrome is among the diseases listed as a presumptive disease related to Agent Orange Exposure; and

WHEREAS, two (2) National Institute of Health (NIH) Studies that analyzed large numbers of VA records that showed a very high correlation of Waldenstrom's Syndrome to military service, including those not having exposure to a herbicide used during the Vietnam Era; and

WHEREAS, there is proof that herbicides were used to clear vegetation other than Vietnam, DMZ in Korea and Thailand, before, during and subsequent to the Vietnam Era; and

WHEREAS, two large samples done by the NIH Epidemiological Studies VA Patients had an unexpectedly high incidence of Waldenstrom's exists in veterans with service period before, during and after the Vietnam Era; and

WHEREAS, Lou Gerhig's disease is a presumptive disease which has a two-fold increase of veterans with the disease over the general population; and

WHEREAS, studies show the same type of ration for veterans with Waldenstrom Macroglobulinemia exists; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, support enactment into the law, legislation adding Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia to the list of presumptive diseases for all. (Rejected)

Resolution No. 632 (Submitted by Department of Colorado)

PRESUMPTIVE RADIATION EXPOSURE FOR U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL
STATIONED AT WOOMERA AIR FORCE STATION IN AUSTRALIA

WHEREAS, the DOD (Department of Defense) had a contingent of U.S. military personnel stationed in the Woomera prohibited area which includes Woomera Air Force Station and Maralinga in South Australia; and

WHEREAS, this station was in the close vicinity of where there was Nuclear Weapons Posting done by United Kingdom/Australia Governments, in the 1950's & 1960's; and

WHEREAS, this area in Australia is not listed on the DOD places where possible Radiation Exposure may exist; and

WHEREAS, an increasing number of veterans stationed at Woomera Air Force Station are contacting these diseases associated with Radiation Exposure; and

WHEREAS these honorably discharged veterans are being denied service connection for any disease associated with radiation exposure and medical treatment at the Veterans Administration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage the Congress of the United States enact legislation to add Maralinga, South Australia and Woomera Air Force Station to the list of areas where Nuclear Testing was done; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Congress of the United States allow Veterans Stationed at Woomera Air Force Station to receive service connection and medical treatment for all diseases associated with their exposure. (Approved as Amended)

COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

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Vice Chairman: Larry W. Rivers, Past Commander-in-Chief, Louisiana

(Room 213ABC, Charlotte Convention Center)

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California	Richard Davenport	2967
Colorado	Ronald Lattin	5061
Connecticut	Alfred Meek	2046
Connecticut	Ronald Rusakiewicz	9460
Connecticut	Gregory Smith	7788
Delaware	Paul Phillips	2863
District of Columbia	Arne Shaw	341
Florida	W. Benny Bachand	4287
Florida	John Hamilton	7909
Florida	Amber Putnam	10141
Georgia	Michael O'Steen	5976
Idaho	Glenn Nielsen	63
Illinois	Laurie Emmer	5768
Illinois	Rick Frank	1461
Illinois	Matthew Mihelcic	2698
Indiana	Leslie Ackermann	2689
Iowa	Danny White	11517
Kansas	Johnathan Duncan	852
Kansas	Bruce Fischbach	7397
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	Claud Wyatt	5704
Louisiana	Wesley Mitchell	3337
Maine	William Bradbury	1605
Massachusetts	John Martin	5737
Massachusetts	Aaron Richardson	697
Michigan	Kevin Conklin	6248
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Michigan	David Prohaska	4434
Minnesota	Samuel Landon	4452
Mississippi	Thomas Rollins	6809
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Deborah Halter	6137
Missouri	Kevin Jones	7356
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Missouri	Zach Schwenk	5606

Montana	Thomas Pouliot	1116
Nebraska	Roger Broeker	1504
Nebraska	Harold Schlender	5289
Nebraska	James Whitaker	9675
Nevada	Robert Barquist	7385
New Hampshire	Rose Connor-Allard	8214
New Jersey	Jennifer Long	1302
New York	Harold Burke	1895
New York	Michael Pascal	9486
North Carolina	Kenneth Sellers	1920
Ohio	Frederick Lavery	1060
Ohio	Gerald Ward	5713
Oklahoma	Robert McGill	4876
Oregon	Judith Burger	4108
Pennsylvania	David Dibelius	6493
Pennsylvania	Ruth Fairchild	315
Pennsylvania	Glenn Umberger	7155
South Carolina	Rodney Burne	3447
South Dakota	Sean Johnson	17
Tennessee	Darrell Birk	8422
Texas	Nicoli Butcher	1657
Texas	Glen Gardner	3359
Texas	Miles Nelson	3413
Utah	Ashley Arnold	3586
Utah	Brent Neilsen	10900
Virginia	Jill Lynch	4809
Virginia	Mark Winn	392
West Virginia	James Talerico	573
Wisconsin	Michael Borg	2778

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Alabama	Edward Pritchard	3073
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California	Everett Martin	1732
California	Daniel Schmaltz	4048

Colorado	Bruce Dolan	7945
Colorado	Robert Kidd	3917
Connecticut	David Greene	10004
Delaware	Mark Newman	3238
Europe	John Lineaweaver	12143
Florida	Everett Grooms	4423
Georgia	Donald Fowler	4742
Idaho	John Crotinger	3520
Idaho	Rick Johnson	4920
Illinois	Robert Migalich	4763
Illinois	Gary Stork	2698
Indiana	Michael Sims	3790
Iowa	Dennis Abel	1797
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	Garry Smethers	1084
Louisiana	Michael Carroll	8290
Louisiana	Fred Wesley	12065
Maine	Andre Dumas	9389
Maryland	Douglas MacArthur	5337
Massachusetts	George Murray	1018
Massachusetts	Michael Raymond	2498
Massachusetts	Paul Spera	144
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Michigan	Lynn Patterson	6695
Michigan	Robert Williams	1137
Minnesota	Duane Hermanson	4452
Mississippi	Johnnie Richard	2539
Mississippi	Danny Williams	3685
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Earl Boyer	1831
Missouri	Kevin Jones	7356
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Nebraska	Jerry Chlopek	3704
Nevada	Edward Sturges	3547
New Hampshire	Travis Bill	9552
New Jersey	Ralph Corno	132
New Jersey	Gary Stoop	5479
New Mexico	Allan Kuchinsky	7686
New York	Art Scheuneman	547
North Carolina	Charles Slater	5206
North Dakota	James Markey	7564
Ohio	Charles Adams	892
Ohio	Chuck Keller	3761
Ohio	Kari Pfeifer	2920

Oregon	Cheryl Campos	10626
Pacific Areas	Peter Callaghan	3457
Pacific Areas	Gerald Kraus	1509
Pennsylvania	Albert Chambers	6345
Pennsylvania	George Fletcher	7043
Pennsylvania	Henty Mannella	1810
Pennsylvania	James Ritchie	6495
Rhode Island	Guyde Lombari	2812
South Carolina	Dwight Hora	8760
South Dakota	Darold Couch	3442
Tennessee	Terry Thomas	1289
Texas	David Adams	3413
Utah	Dennis Parizek	1481
Vermont	John Boardman	6689
Virginia	Tommy Hines	9954
Washington	Charles Noble	10711
West Virginia	Robert Caruthers	9926
West Virginia	Robert Haight	437
Wisconsin	Walter Hogan	6498
Wisconsin	Wilfred Johnson	10544
Wisconsin	William Knudson	1866

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Alabama	Bryant Bray	5660
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Arkansas	Donald Barnes	8245
Arkansas	William Beams	2278
California	Charles Anfuso	2111
California	Robert Crider	9223
California	John Vojtas	1512
Colorado	Peter Buchanan	1771
Colorado	Fredic Scheck	6624
Connecticut	Robert Crandall	10060
Connecticut	Charles Pickett	12150

Delaware	Robert McVaugh	3420
Delaware	John Morrow	475
District of Columbia	RoseAnn Clark	7284
District of Columbia	Clinton Townsend	9755
Europe	Herbert Hall	9342
Europe	Wayne Holder	10810
Florida	Raymond Jarvis	3991
Florida	Glen Tilley	2391
Georgia	Charles Dobbins	5080
Georgia	Joseph O'Neill	2872
Georgia	RD Smith	4346
Hawaii	Ronald Lockwood	8616
Idaho	Robert Jones	3012
Illinois	Michael De Ross	8821
Illinois	Nina Petru	3873
Indiana	Roger Chandler	6582
Indiana	Britton Shoellhorn	12153
Indiana	William Shoultz	3587
Iowa	Stuart Juarez	738
Iowa	Tonielle Parizek	8884
Iowa	Bradley Whitmore	9127
Kansas	Dallas Love	7253
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	James Vieira	6423
Kentucky	Michael Whitfield	5484
Louisiana	Robert Lovergne	3750
Maine	Amy Meuchel	6859
Maine	David Williams	1641
Maryland	Robert Brown	1936
Maryland	James Everett	6506
Maryland	Monica Lipscomb	8509
Massachusetts	Robert Graser	1822
Massachusetts	David Josselyn	2498
Massachusetts	Christine Tron	545
Michigan	Ronald Amend	7486
Michigan	William Coats	701
Michigan	Harry Croyle	6756
Michigan	Scott Gloger	4156
Michigan	Jerry Newberry	2492
Minnesota	Gary Anderson	6587
Minnesota	Tate Doom	295
Minnesota	Stephen O Connor	4114
Mississippi	Kenneth McCarter	12124
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356

Missouri	Jimmy Cook	30
Missouri	Nancy Cowan	5327
Missouri	Paul Frampton	11290
Missouri	Kevin Jones	7356
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Montana	Michael Bennett	2252
Nebraska	John Iossi	3704
Nebraska	Joseph Smith	2280
Nevada	Joe Rigsby	2350
New Hampshire	Zachary Gilding	816
New Hampshire	Russell Norris	11373
New Jersey	Thomas Farrell	3020
New Jersey	Frederick Gould	1593
New Jersey	Fritz Mueller	9503
New Mexico	Joseph Devargas	3259
New Mexico	Karla Eaton	9515
New York	Philip Ippolito	2940
New York	James Longendyke	1386
New York	Marlene Roll	7967
New York	Bruce Terwilliger	686
New York	Walter Zancio	9593
North Carolina	John Harris	4286
North Carolina	John Shelander	670
North Dakota	James Hapala	7564
Ohio	Daniel Faulkner	657
Ohio	Paul Jones	5108
Ohio	Colleen Wiley	5803
Oklahoma	James Bassett	8706
Oklahoma	Curtis Bohlman	1335
Oklahoma	Michael Devenitch	8706
Oklahoma	Curtis Watts	4578
Oregon	Ronald Jagodnik	3973
Pacific Areas	William Hudson	12146
Pennsylvania	Charles Beattie	212
Pennsylvania	Joseph Benacci	470
Pennsylvania	James Miller	12019
Pennsylvania	Wayne Perry	7505
Pennsylvania	Ronald Peters	212
Rhode Island	Joseph Cerrito	8018
Rhode Island	Franklin Rosebrock	5392
South Carolina	M Gunter	8738
South Carolina	Betty Hilliard	3433
South Dakota	Jackie Frisby-Griffin	2638
South Dakota	Kenneth Payne	6554

Tennessee	Michael Gratton	4840
Texas	Keith Foley	2933
Texas	Darrell Moore	7426
Utah	Elmer Inman	6395
Vermont	David Bruley	758
Vermont	Donald Dockter	792
Vermont	Allston Gilmond	782
Virginia	Douglas Iles	392
Virginia	Eddie Reasor	5715
Washington	Frederick Green	2669
Washington	Teddy Wright	51
West Virginia	Melvin Goddard	4484
Wisconsin	William Murphy	1621
Wisconsin	Gerald Parchem	987
Wyoming	Earl Sellers	4343

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California	James Certain	1622
California	Joseph Guest	2805
District of Columbia	Herman Salley	2979
District of Columbia	Allen White	341
Florida	Mark Alvarez	3308
Florida	Kurt Schuh	5277
Florida	Michael White	3559

Georgia	Alfred Lipphardt	12002
Hawaii	Joseph Davis	3391
Hawaii	Stanley Fernandez	10276
Illinois	Barbara Wilson	3455
Indiana	Gregory Baker	6978
Indiana	Glen Bumpus	1257
Iowa	Russell Saffell	9127
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	Aaron Cardwell	4075
Kentucky	Bruce Unland	5480
Louisiana	Bryan Batulis	5735
Louisiana	John Fauver	3784
Maryland	Hugh Warner	3285
Massachusetts	Ralph Masciulli	144
Michigan	Robert Jackson	2725
Michigan	Phil Patterson	6695
Minnesota	Curtis Hermanson	4452
Minnesota	John Staum	9625
Minnesota	Steven Van Bergen	1296
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Missouri	Dewey Riehn	280
Nebraska	Richard Morrison	8334
Nebraska	Dan Petersen	131
Nevada	Gilbert Hernandez	2350
New Hampshire	Paul Chevalier	168
New Jersey	Barbara Fitzgerald	10065
New York	Melvin Garrett	6396
New York	John Lewis	8692
New York	James Longendyke	1386
New York	James Mc Nally	53
North Carolina	Jason Schoolcraft	8073
Ohio	Tommie Leininger	5713
Oklahoma	Troy Hensch	5263
Pacific Areas	Shawn Watson	2917
Pennsylvania	Peter Hook	6393
Pennsylvania	Allen Jones	21
Pennsylvania	John Moyer	7155
Rhode Island	Allen Wagonblott	5392
South Carolina	Frank Fogner	10804
South Dakota	Russel Dramstad	1776
Tennessee	Claude Abbott	10855
Tennessee	John Furgess	1970
Tennessee	Darryl Mc Pheron	9754

Vermont	Brenda Cruickshank	790
Virginia	John Smart	1503
Washington	Carlos Almeda	2224
West Virginia	Randall Bare	6669
West Virginia	Charles Haney	7048
Wisconsin	Bruce Sorensen	7534
Wyoming	Rodney Birkle	3558
Wyoming	James Pedersen	2673

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Carlos Fuentes, Deputy Director, NLS

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Ken Wiseman, manager, Action Corp, NLS

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Alabama	Cassandra Simons	1349
Alaska	Gerry Glover	9785
Arizona	Tom Judd	9907
Arizona	James Katzenberger	10695
Arkansas	M Ashleigh Brashers	4501
Arkansas	Tony Burns	4562
Arkansas	Terry Callahan	9095
Arkansas	Ronald Snead	9095
California	Mark Barrett	11387
California	Buford Maples	5985
Colorado	Jeffery Lohse	9644
Connecticut	Robert Bailey	10153
Connecticut	Robert Tozzoli	9929
Delaware	Dawn Drzewicki	6984
Delaware	David Hilliard	475
District of Columbia	William Bennett	346
District of Columbia	Oran Danzy	341
Europe	Allen Ashton	27
Europe	Norberto Millet	9342
Europe	Dale Nagan	10708
Georgia	Kevin Hammond	7402
Georgia	Joel Willis	5290
Florida	Jason Smith	10140
Hawaii	George Barlett	10154
Hawaii	Joseph Bragg	12138
Idaho	William Heyob	63
Illinois	Derek Giffin	2378
Illinois	Russell Rieke	5694
Indiana	Richard Lineberry	2457
Indiana	Christopher Stein	6904
Iowa	Richard Davis	788
Iowa	Scott McDonald	1623
Kansas	Bobby Cox	2715
Kansas	Todd Hokanson	3279
Kansas	David Kennedy	6957
Kansas	John Muckelbauer	3712
Kentucky	Gerald Kayrouz	1170
Kentucky	Richard Quire	4075
Louisiana	Gerald Dugas	3121
Louisiana	Alfred Leger	6720
Maine	Raymond Lupo	4633
Maine	Louis Peterson	6859
Maine	Arthur Roy	1603
Maryland	Dawn Jirak	8810

Maryland	Raymond Kelley	16
Maryland	Frank Vitale	8672
Maryland	Mary Walters	10077
Massachusetts	Mark Allen	1822
Massachusetts	Gerard Maguire	8349
Michigan	Paul Pirlot	4230
Michigan	Jennifer Smith	701
Minnesota	Scott Bill	3915
Minnesota	Jon Gohn	6208
Minnesota	Michael Pierce	3723
Mississippi	Jeffory McKenzie	9832
Mississippi	Raybon Windham	9122
Missouri	Debra Anderson	7356
Missouri	Gerald Boyer	1831
Missouri	Dennis Flynn	2866
Missouri	Lawrence Maher	7356
Missouri	Norman Morgan	5368
Montana	Daniel Arnold	1087
Montana	Robert Schwegel	6786
Nebraska	Bernard Brosnihan	10727
Nebraska	James Pierce	5547
Nevada	Denise Estes	10053
New Hampshire	Dana Hussey	1772
New Hampshire	Robert Jordan	4479
New Jersey	Manuel Almeida	2226
New Jersey	Warren George	6590
New Jersey	Bernard McElwee	10184
New Mexico	Cynthia Archuleta	5890
New Mexico	Kathie Schiebel	401
New York	John Mauro	9486
New York	William Schmitz	524
New York	Barbara Serena	3180
New York	Thomas Todaro	53
North Carolina	Jessie Bellflowers	10630
North Carolina	Cleophus Summers	1134
North Dakota	Russel Foster	7564
Ohio	Harry English	5108
Ohio	Wayne Hutchison	7670
Ohio	Robert Kroeger	2947
Oklahoma	Robert Allan Clark	4876
Oklahoma	John Runfola	7977
Oregon	Jason Carroll	3973
Oregon	Bert Key	4273
Oregon	Juan Palacios	10626

Pacific Areas	Barry Moshinsky	12146
Pennsylvania	Earl Colella	32
Pennsylvania	John Foster	2
Pennsylvania	James Haller	7362
Rhode Island	Roger Lavoie	5392
Rhode Island	Gary Maddocks	2929
South Carolina	Jimmy Wallace	11079
South Dakota	William Huffmon	1273
South Dakota	Gordon Paul	2038
Tennessee	James Lindsey	1294
Tennessee	Reginald Sims	1848
Texas	John Lozanski	5076
Texas	Angel Ramirez	3377
Utah	Brent Lyon	12087
Vermont	Joseph LaPerle	9449
Vermont	Paul Perreault	790
Virginia	Ryan Gallucci	3150
Virginia	Bobbiejo Lazo	637
Virginia	Gerald Manar	609
Virginia	Robert Meade	4411
Washington	Cheri Knox Reid	1435
West Virginia	William Cusson	4469
West Virginia	Thomas Lyons	9796
Wisconsin	Phillip Allen	7308
Wisconsin	Daniel Driscoll	9207
Wisconsin	John Giese	6375
Wyoming	Cheryl Shannon	1881

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Vice Chairman: Clifford G. Olson, Past Commander-in-Chief, Massachusetts

Department	Name	Post No.
Kansas	Johnathan Duncan	852
Michigan	David E. Prohaska	7674
Missouri	Zach Schwenk	5606

